



TOMMY RICH - TO HELL AND BACK

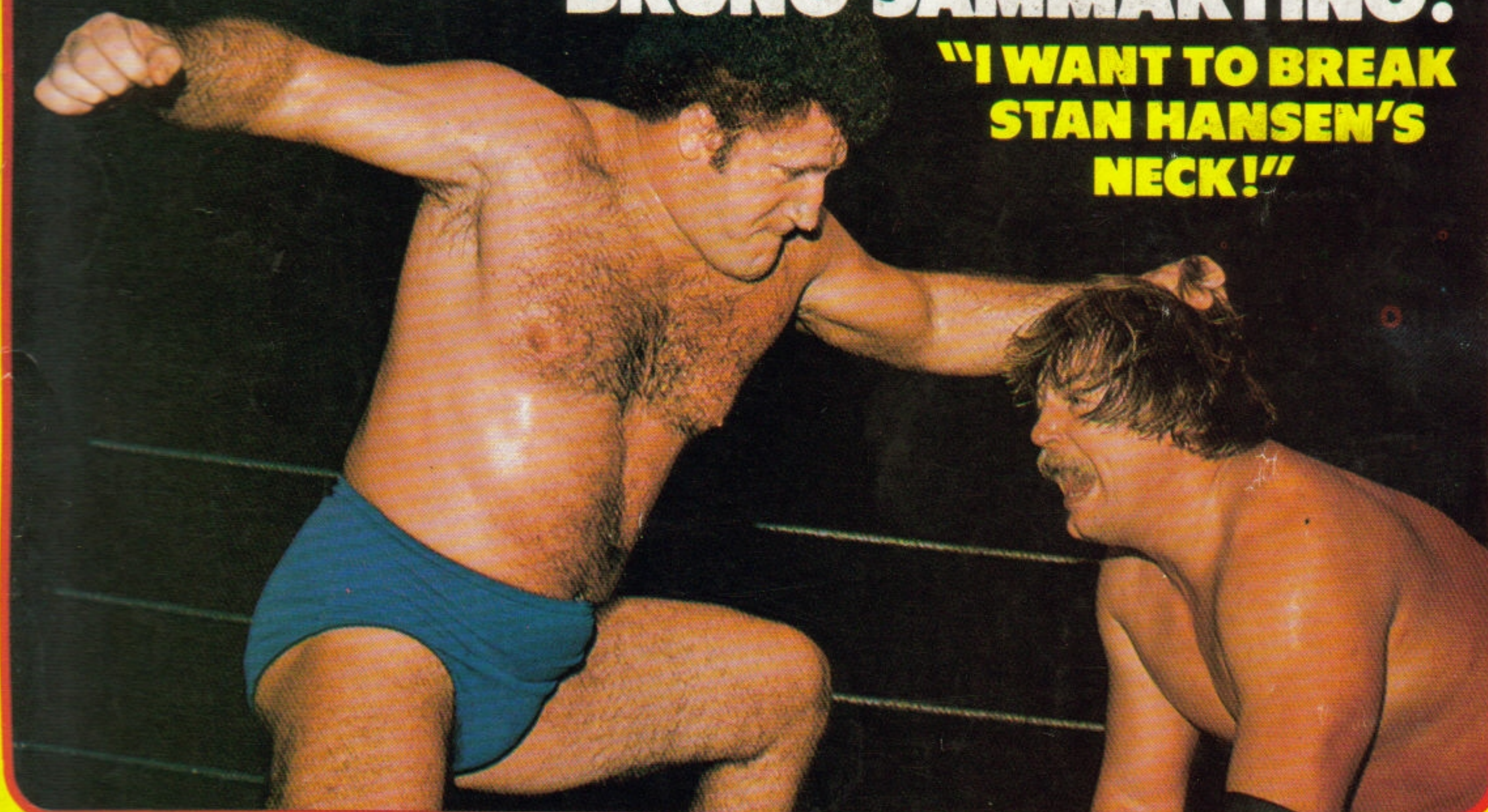
June 1981

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THE Wrestler

BRUNO SAMMARTINO:

**"I WANT TO BREAK
STAN HANSEN'S
NECK!"**



**THE MOST IMPORTANT
MATCH IN VERNE GAGNE'S LIFE**

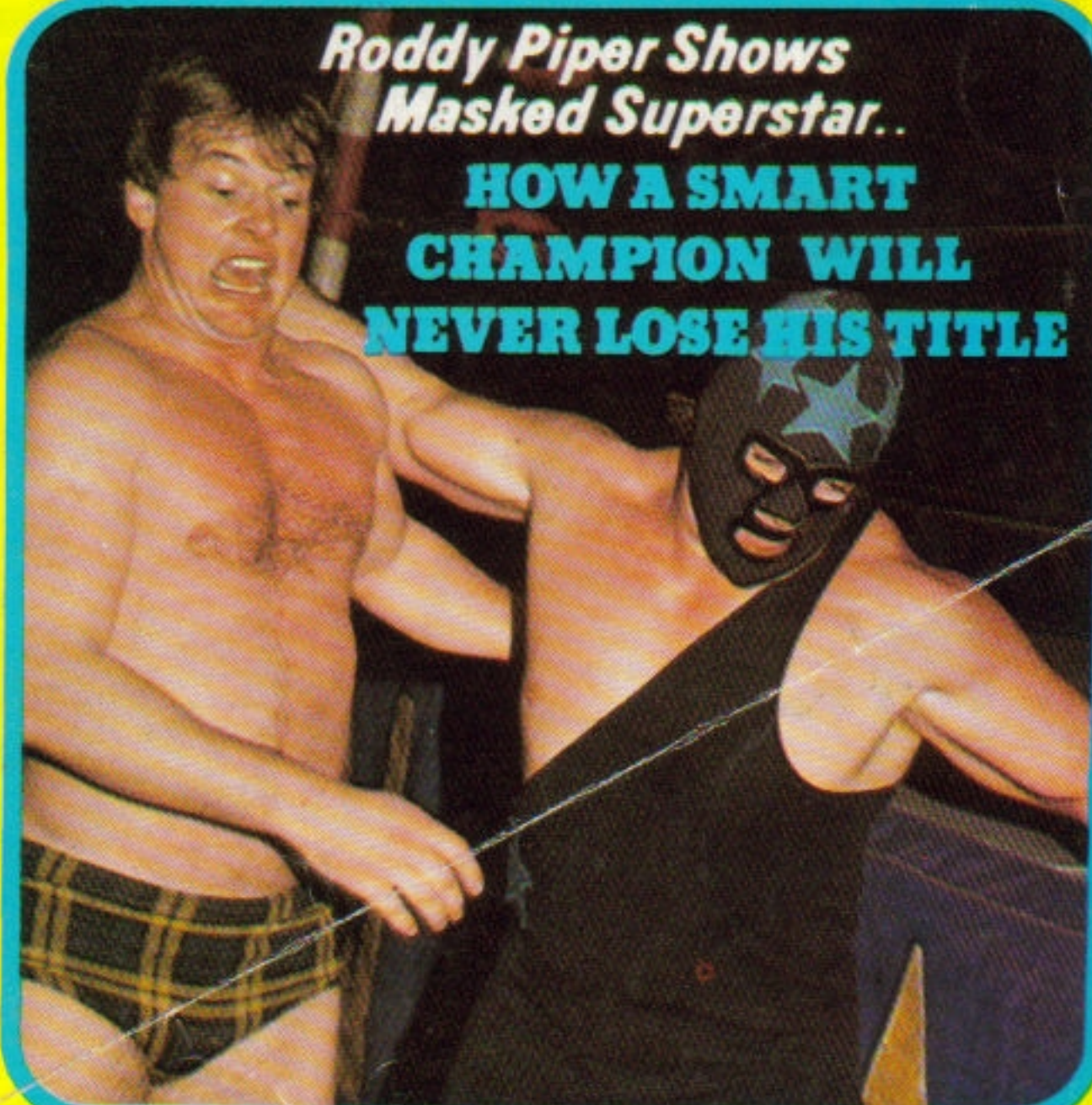
**THE MATCH MONGOLIAN
STOMPER WON BY LOSING**

**GAREA & MARTEL:
IS GREATNESS GOOD ENOUGH?**

**MIKE GRAHAM -
IN TROUBLE ON HIS OWN**

*Roddy Piper Shows
Masked Superstar..*

**HOW A SMART
CHAMPION WILL
NEVER LOSE HIS TITLE**



OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

Champion: BOB BACKLUND

- 1—HULK HOGAN
- 2—STAN HANSEN
- 3—KILLER KHAN
- 4—PEDRO MORALES
- 5—ANGELO MOSCA
- 6—SGT. SLAUGHTER
- 7—PAT PATTERSON
- 8—LARRY ZBYSZKO
- 9—RICK MARTEL
- 10—TONY GAREA

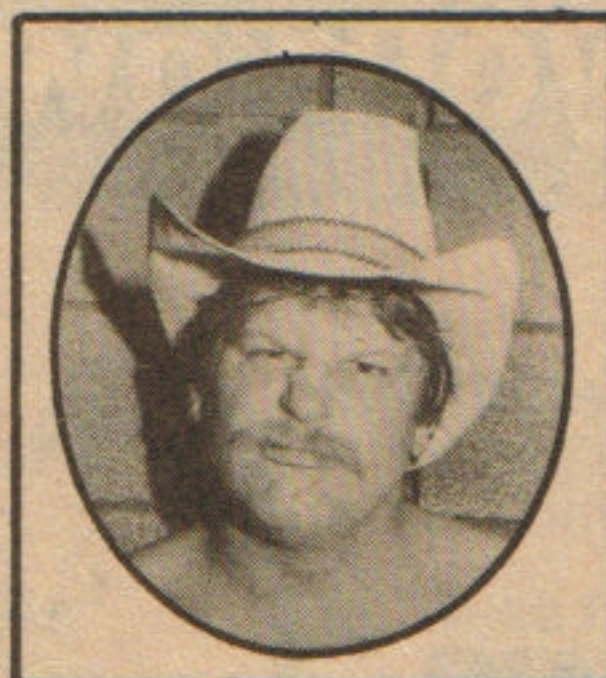
AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

Champion: VERNE GAGNE

- 1—NICK BOCKWINKEL
- 2—BILLY ROBINSON
- 3—JOHN STUDD
- 4—DINO BRAVO
- 5—CRUSHER BLACKWELL
- 6—JIM BRUNZELL
- 7—MAD DOG VACHON
- 8—TITO SANTANA
- 9—GREG GAGNE
- 10—JESSE VENTURA

MOST POPULAR

- 1—ANDRE THE GIANT
- 2—BRUNO SAMMARTINO
- 3—DUSTY RHODES
- 4—MIL MASCARAS
- 5—BOB BACKLUND
- 6—RICK STEAMBOAT
- 7—PEDRO MORALES
- 8—IVAN PUTSKI
- 9—DINO BRAVO
- 10—JUNKYARD DOG



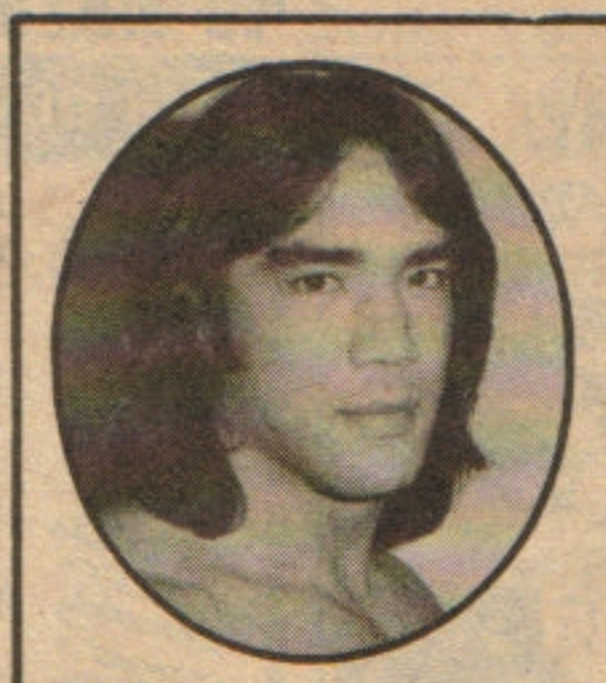
STAN HANSEN



JIM BRUNZELL



TONY ATLAS



RICK STEAMBOAT

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

Champion: HARLEY RACE

- 1—RODDY PIPER
- 2—TONY ATLAS
- 3—RICK STEAMBOAT
- 4—TED DiBIASE
- 5—BARRY WINDHAM
- 6—DICK SLATER
- 7—DUSTY RHODES
- 8—MR. WRESTLING II
- 9—LES THORNTON
- 10—KERRY VON ERICH

TAG TEAMS

- 1—PAUL JONES & MASKED SUPERSTAR
- 2—TONY GAREA & RICK MARTEL
- 3—JESSE VENTURA & ADRIAN ADONIS
- 4—THE FREEBIRDS
- 5—GEORGE WELLS & DEWEY ROBERTSON
- 6—BOBBY JAGGERS & R.T. TYLER
- 7—THE MOONDOGS
- 8—KERRY VON ERICH & BRUISER BRODIE
- 9—GREG GAGNE & JIM BRUNZELL
- 10—THE BOUNTY HUNTERS

MOST HATED

- 1—STAN HANSEN
- 2—LARRY ZBYSZKO
- 3—KILLER KHAN
- 4—GREG VALENTINE
- 5—MASKED GRAPPLER
- 6—KEN PATERA
- 7—BARON VON RASCHKE
- 8—MICHAEL HAYES
- 9—EDDY MANSFIELD
- 10—DENNIS CONDRI

CORRESPONDENTS Reports

CINCINNATI, OH—Correspondent: Bob McCreary—

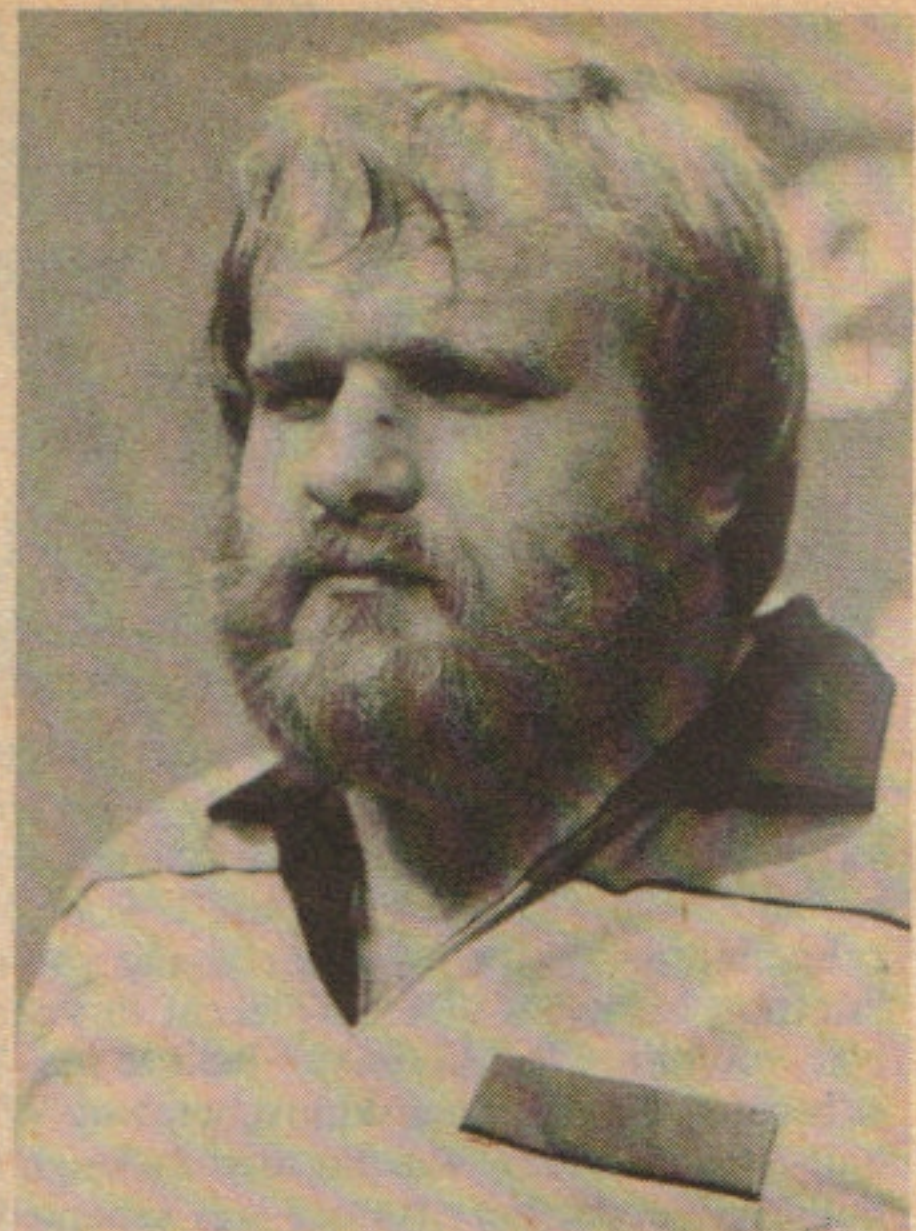
The main event put arch-enemies Ric Flair and Greg Valentine in a ring barely big enough for their hatred. The match was even until Nature Boy Flair captured Valentine in a figure-four leglock. Valentine escaped by grabbing the ropes, but the figure-four had taken its toll and it was only a matter of time until Flair finished him off for the win.

In other matches, Jimmy Snuka and Ivan Koloff bested George Wells and Johnny Weaver . . . Hussein Arab stopped Frankie Lane in an exciting match.

If you would like your area of the country represented in these reports, while also being officially credited with your own by-line, send us reports of the matches you attend. You will have the thrill of seeing your name in an internationally known magazine while at the same time helping to improve the quality of wrestling in your area. So why not give it a try? You will be glad you did!

Send your reports to: Correspondent Editor, Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.

JACKSONVILLE, FL—Correspondent: Rick Clendenin—The main event was a match between Dusty Rhodes, The American



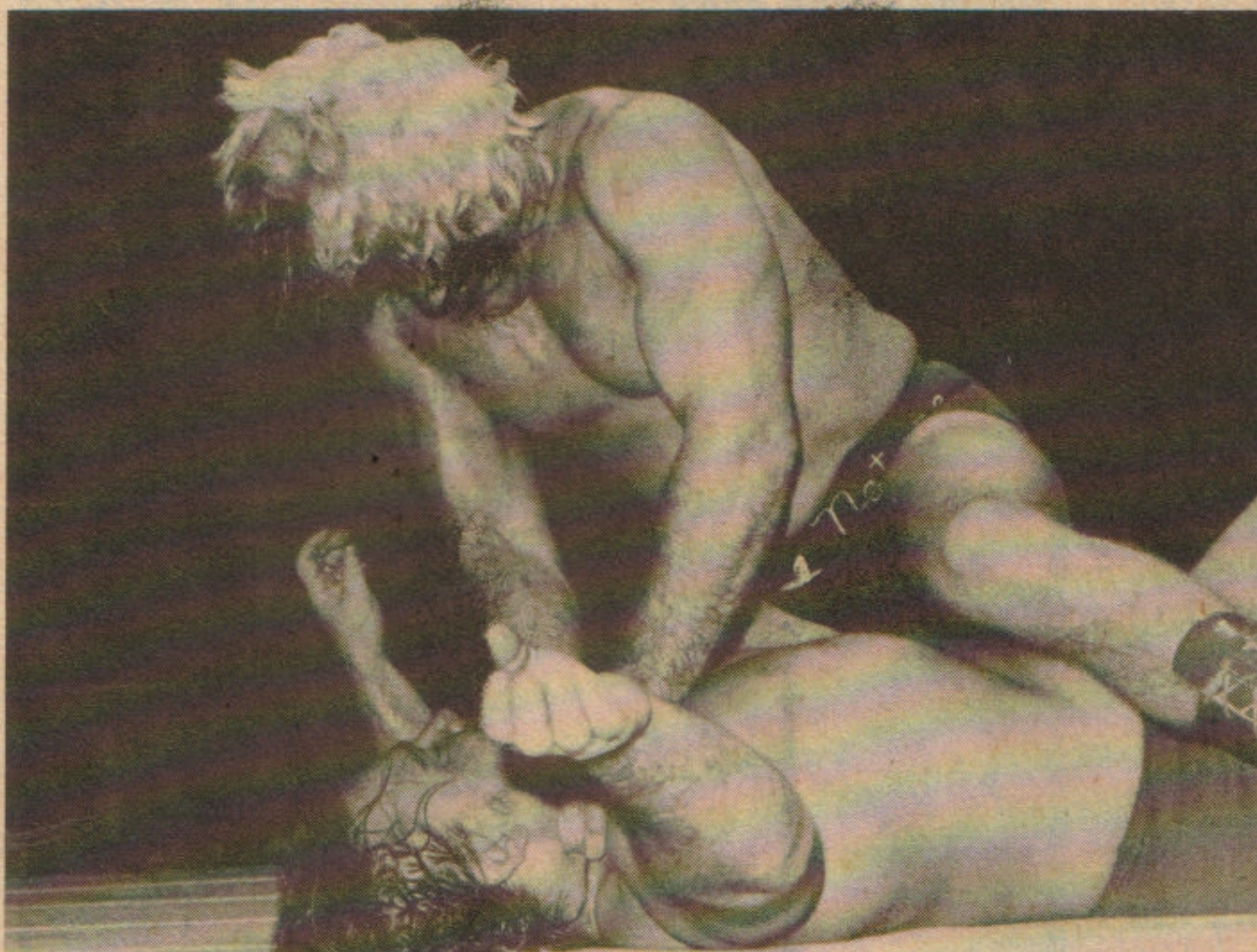
Ole Anderson, a man without scruples, was disqualified in his match with Dusty Rhodes for throwing the referee out of the ring.

Dream, and Ole Anderson. Anderson started the match with a series of blows to the midsection of Rhodes. Later, Anderson pulled out a pair of brass knuckles. While trying to put them back in his knee pad, Anderson was caught by the ref. So what did Anderson do? He threw the referee out of the ring. That led to a disqualification and victory for Dusty Rhodes.

In other bouts, Barry Windham won by disqualification over Dick Slater . . . Sweet Brown Sugar and Mike Graham whipped Bobby Jagers and R.T. Tyler . . . Nikolai Volkoff and Chris Marcoff stopped Mike Davis and Scott McGhee.

SCRANTON, PA—Correspondent: Sam DePrimo—Once again, Sgt. Slaughter challenged Bob Backlund for the WWF championship. Backlund was out for revenge for all the times Slaughter cheated and deprived the champ of untainted victory. Backlund controlled the early part of the match, but Slaughter battled back ferociously until the action spilled out of the ring. Once the match poured back into the ring, Backlund covered the challenger.

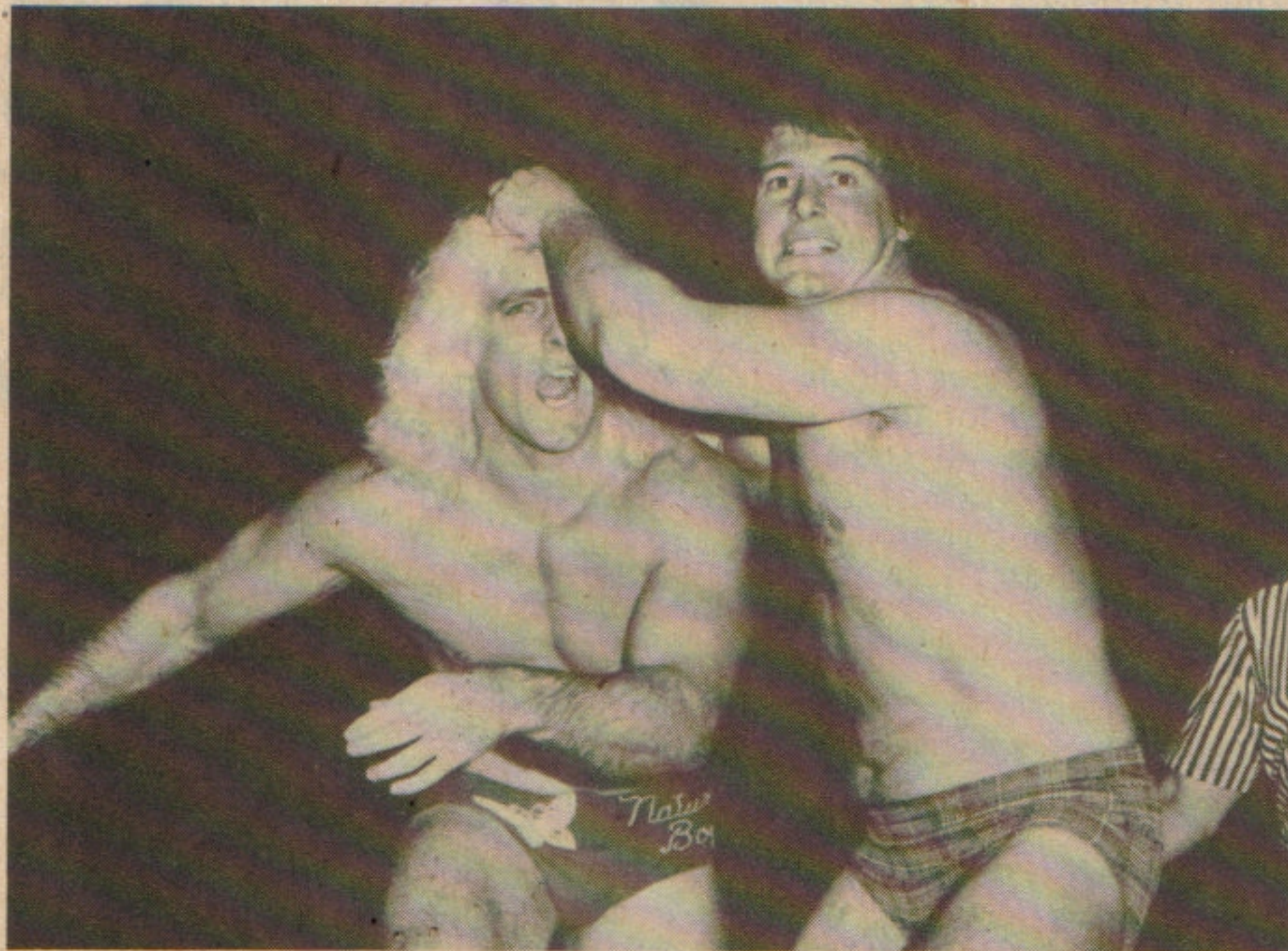
(Continued on page 50)



Soaking in his own blood, Ric Flair grabs holds of Greg Valentine's throat and tries to squeeze the life out of him. Flair won this brawl after weakening Valentine with a figure-four leglock.

YOU ASKED US

Here's the monthly feature which YOU get to write! It's your chance to have a top wrestler answer YOUR question! Only the best questions will be answered—so put on your thinking caps and come up with some good ones! Address your questions—and who you would like to have answer them—to: YOU ASKED US, c/o THE WRESTLER, PO BOX 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571. Questions will be answered only in this column and at our discretion!



Ric Flair initially took his loss of the U.S. title to Roddy Piper very hard. Ric has worked hard to fight off the depression and now insists that he will once again reign as champion.

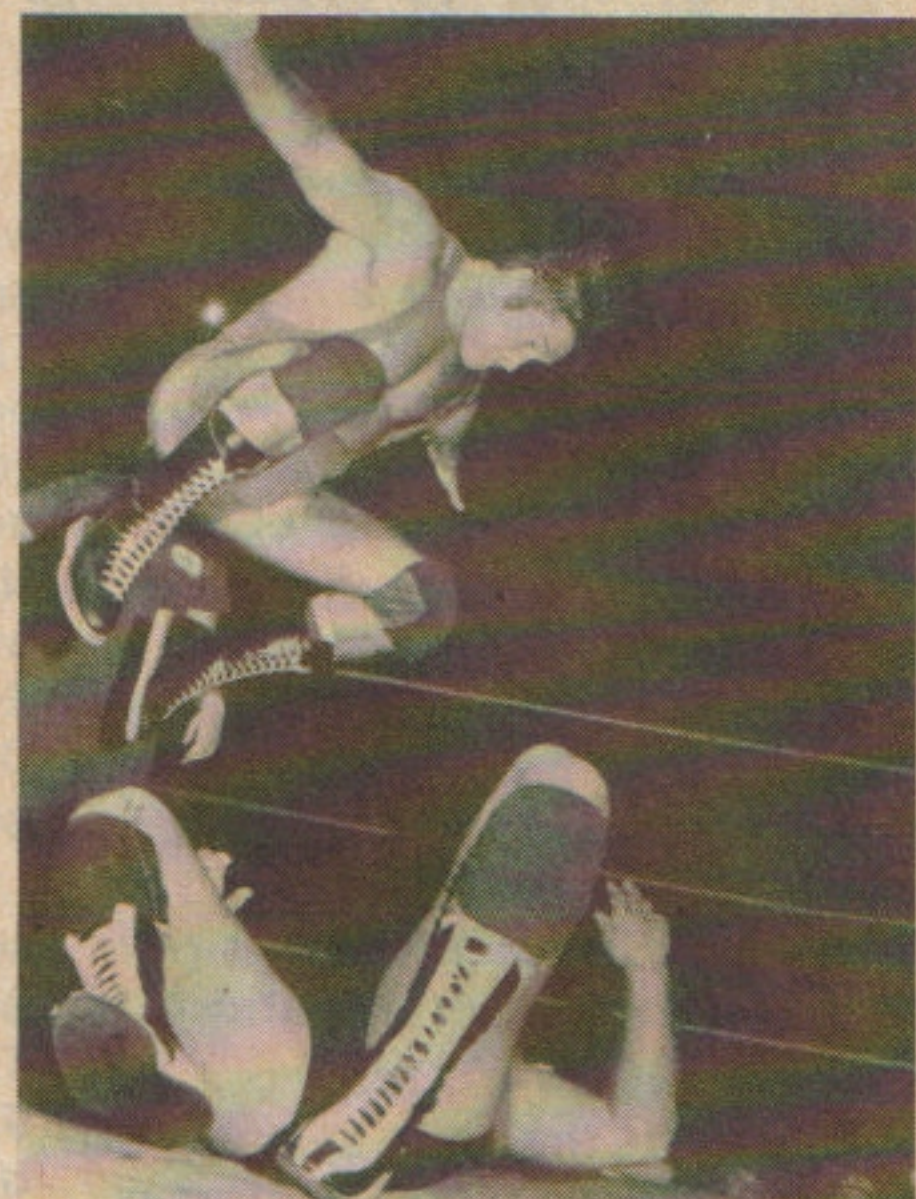
Q: "How does Ric Flair feel after losing the United States heavyweight title to that bum Roddy Piper?"—Alberto Torres, Lynchburg, VA

A: "Rusty, I have to say it's like losing my soul," said Flair. "I have never felt so bad in my whole life, I, I really didn't

know what to do with myself. I wasn't sure if I wanted to sit in a dark office or punch out a wall or just lay down and cry. I'm still not over it. But I can reassure all my fans that I'll go out and get back the title if it's the very last thing I ever do."

Q: "What is the maximum weight allowed for any champion holding the NWA junior heavyweight title and the WWF junior heavyweight title?"—Nicholas Swanson, Little Rock, AR

A: According to the NWA regulations, no junior champion can weigh more than 225



Les Thornton leaps upon a prone Mike Graham in an NWA junior heavyweight title defense. Tatsumi Fujinami reigns in the WWF, while the AWA does not recognize the weight class.

pounds and hold the title. The maximum weight allowed for any WWF junior heavyweight champion is 230 pounds. No plans are contemplated to make the weight limits for both titles the same.

Q: "How come we don't hear so much about the glories of Bruno Sammartino anymore. I mean, after all, the man is still the greatest living wrestler, his legend unsurpassed, and yet it seems the man goes almost unreported by your publication. Now really, shouldn't you still be putting Bruno on every cover?"—Mort Kapeler, McDonald, PA

A: Bruno will certainly never be forgotten by this magazine. See the cover.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING!

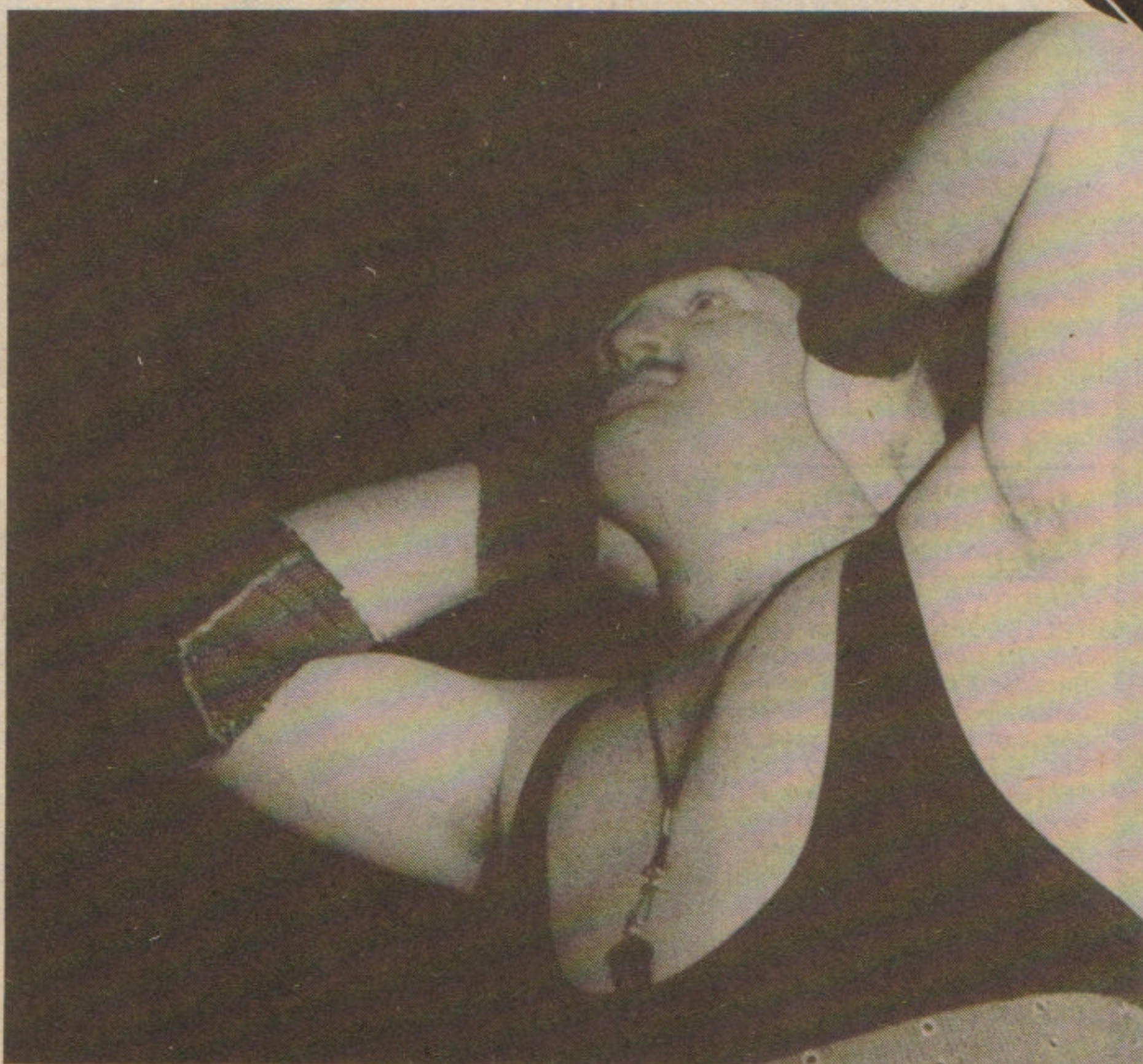
By BILL APTER

FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS. That is the amount Sgt. Slaughter is offering to any wrestler who can break out of his deadly "Cobra" hold.

"That's right, 5,000 smackers!" exclaims Slaughter's manager, The Grand Wizard, who the Sergeant now calls "General." There is one man excluded from the offer, however. That man is Pat Patterson, Slaughter says that if Patterson can undo the hold, he gets 10 grand! "The reason behind this," Slaughter explains, "is the General hates Patterson so much he has added another \$5,000 of his own money to make him look worse."

Slaughter has also asked us to beg the fans to please stop calling him "Gomer." "Gonter, is the lowest thing any Marine can be called," Slaughter says. "Gomer refers to men like Gomer Pyle who cleaned latrines. That is below me. I am a Sergeant and demand to be treated like one!"

NWA champion Harley Race is putting his title on the line in a cage match against "Mr. U.S.A.," Tony Atlas. This is one of the rare occasions that Race has put the belt on the line in a match like this.



The sound of 20,000 wrestling fans chanting, "Gomer... Gomer," is too much for Sgt. Slaughter as he covers his ears. Slaughter's manager, Grand Wizard, has offered \$5,000 to anyone who could escape the Sergeant's Cobra hold.

"Tony Atlas keeps making excuses why he has not been able to beat me," Race told us. "He suggested a Cage Match, figuring I would chicken out. Well, Atlas, I am going to show you I can beat you in any kind of match you want."

The Masked Grappler has regained the Mississippi title from

Killer Karl Kox. Now the mysterious masked man holds both the North American and Mississippi belts... Ted DiBiase and his steady tag team partner, Robert Fuller, had a small tiff after a recent clash against The Freebirds. Turns out the uneasy

(Continued on page 54)

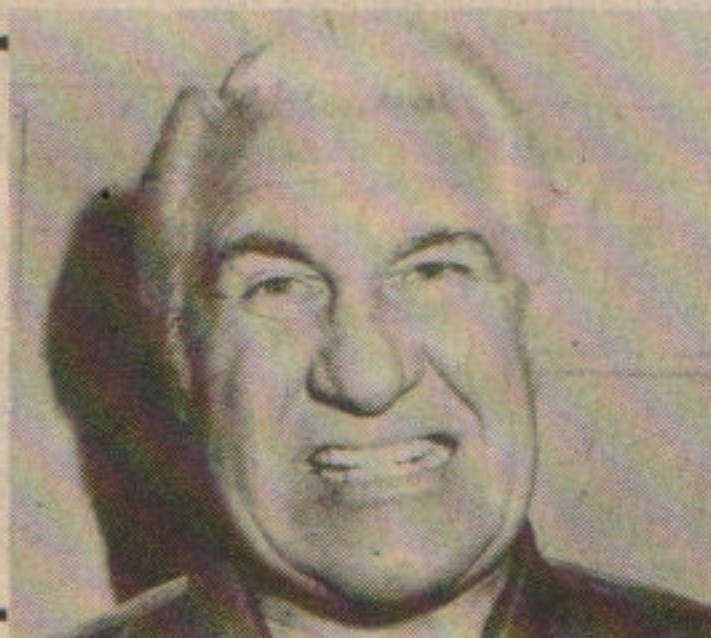
Every issue, this magazine praises the noteworthy and damns those who violate the spirit of wrestling's dignity. The praiseworthy are given a "thumbs up," the disgraceful are marked with "thumbs down." Here is this month's roll of honor and shame

Thumbs Up



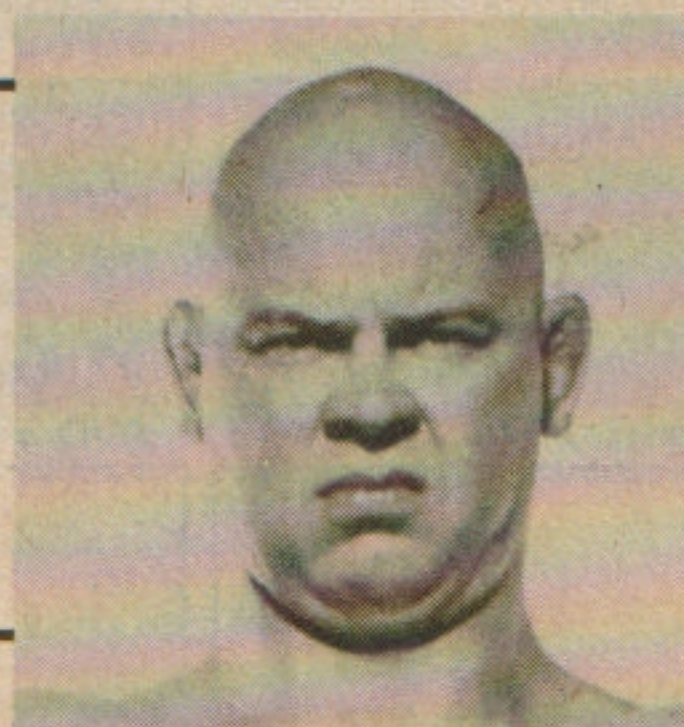
THUMBS UP to Don Diamond: Despite a heartbreaking loss to Tatsumi Fujinami in their WWF junior heavyweight championship, his thrilling, valorous style excited a very discriminating Madison Square Garden crowd. Tough yet fair, Diamond deserves careful attention as one of the rising stars of the near future.

THUMBS DOWN to Stan Hansen: His unchecked use of the fearsome Lariat hold has caused innumerable injuries. By running rampant through the East Coast, Hansen has solidified his reputation as a cruel man concerned solely with his own selfish ambitions. For this, he deserves contempt.



THUMBS UP to Fred Blassie: This man never quits. No matter what manner of setbacks encountered in his travels, he persists in bringing challenger after challenger into the WWF in a furious attempt to seize Bob Backlund's championship. Whatever his methods, Blassie has earned grudging admiration from all knowledgeable wrestling people.

THUMBS DOWN to Baron Von Raschke: By plotting to exterminate Buggy McGraw, Von Raschke once more raises doubts about his legal capacity to remain in the United States. There are laws, Mr. Raschke, laws which prohibit and prevent such plots as you and the Russians have hatched. Be forewarned the Department of Immigration has begun review of your files.



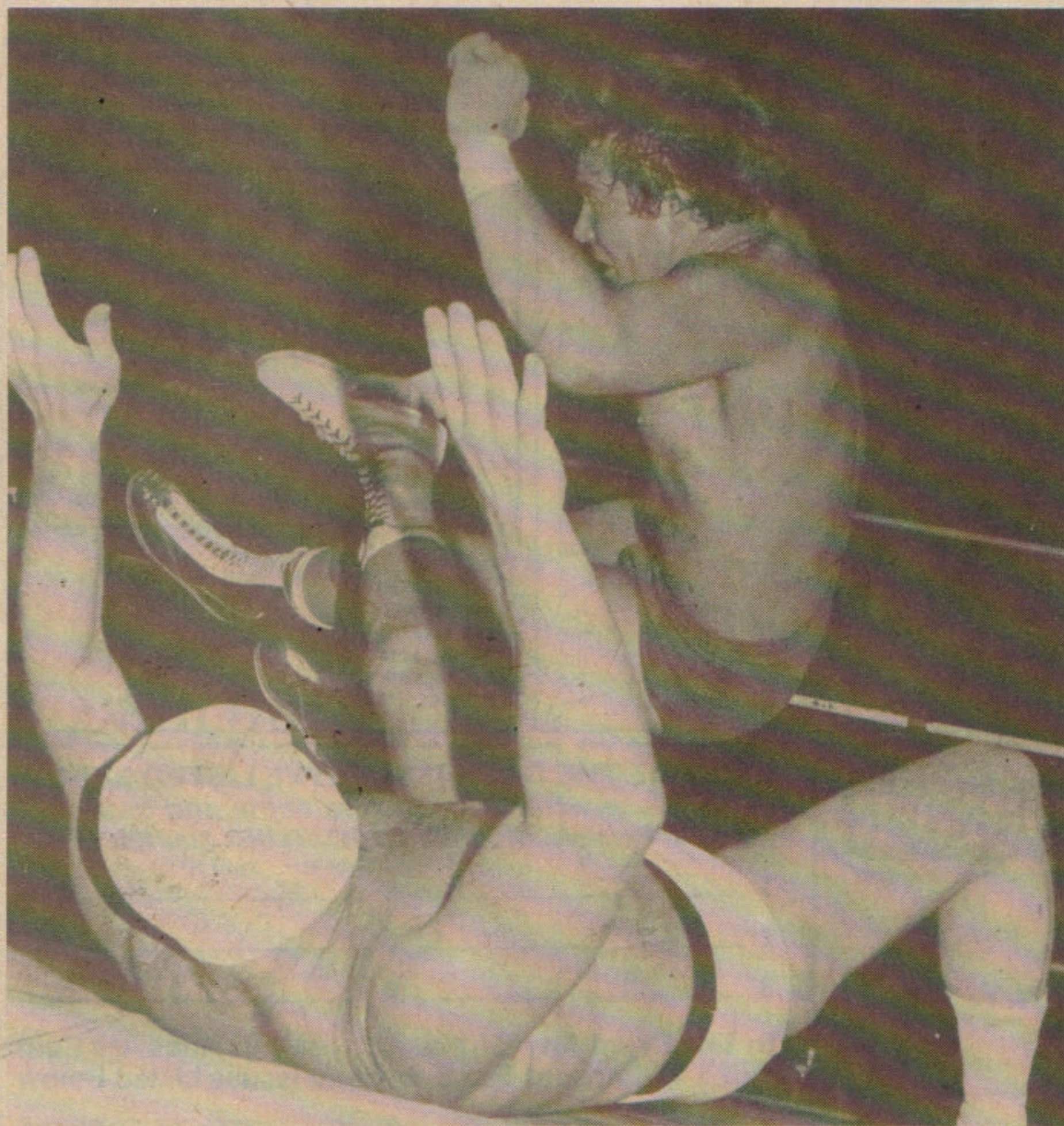
THUMBS UP to Blackjack Mulligan: Despite terrorizing threats and tantalizing bribes, Mulligan remains a man committed to the scientific side of wrestling. A few years ago, when this kind giant made his conversion away from rulebreaking, we doubted his intentions were honest. Today we are delighted to admit we were wrong.

(Continued on page 58)

Thumbs Down

Q & A

Each month, **THE WRESTLER** will present a "Question and Answer" forum with an important figure in the wrestling world. It is your chance to meet wrestling's biggest stars as they answer the questions uppermost on the fans' minds



DiBiase drops across Mr. Wrestling II's leg during last year's thrilling scientific confrontation. Ted credits II for helping him prepare for the top-notch Georgia competition.

Q: Ted, we'd like to welcome you to Q & A.

A: Oh, please, my pleasure. You writers are the tunnel to the fans. I always have time to speak to the public, no matter what the questions.

Q: Okay then. Earlier in your career, things didn't go quite as smoothly as you would have liked.

A: I had my share of frustrations.

Q: Why?

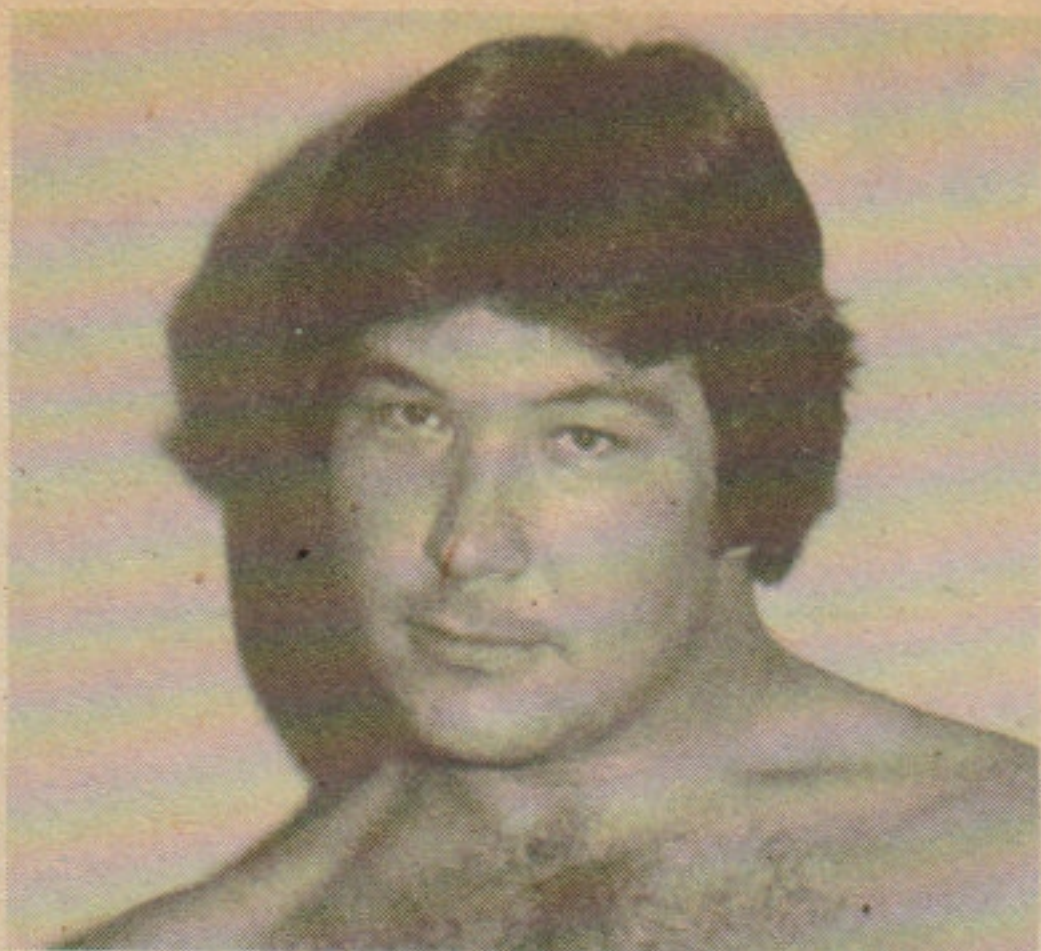
A: Why was I frustrated?

Q: Yes, you couldn't have expected immediate fame and fortune.

A: Yeah, I think I did, that being a big part of my problem. In fact, I'd have to say Ted DiBiase was the biggest obstacle I had to surmount in my beginning days.

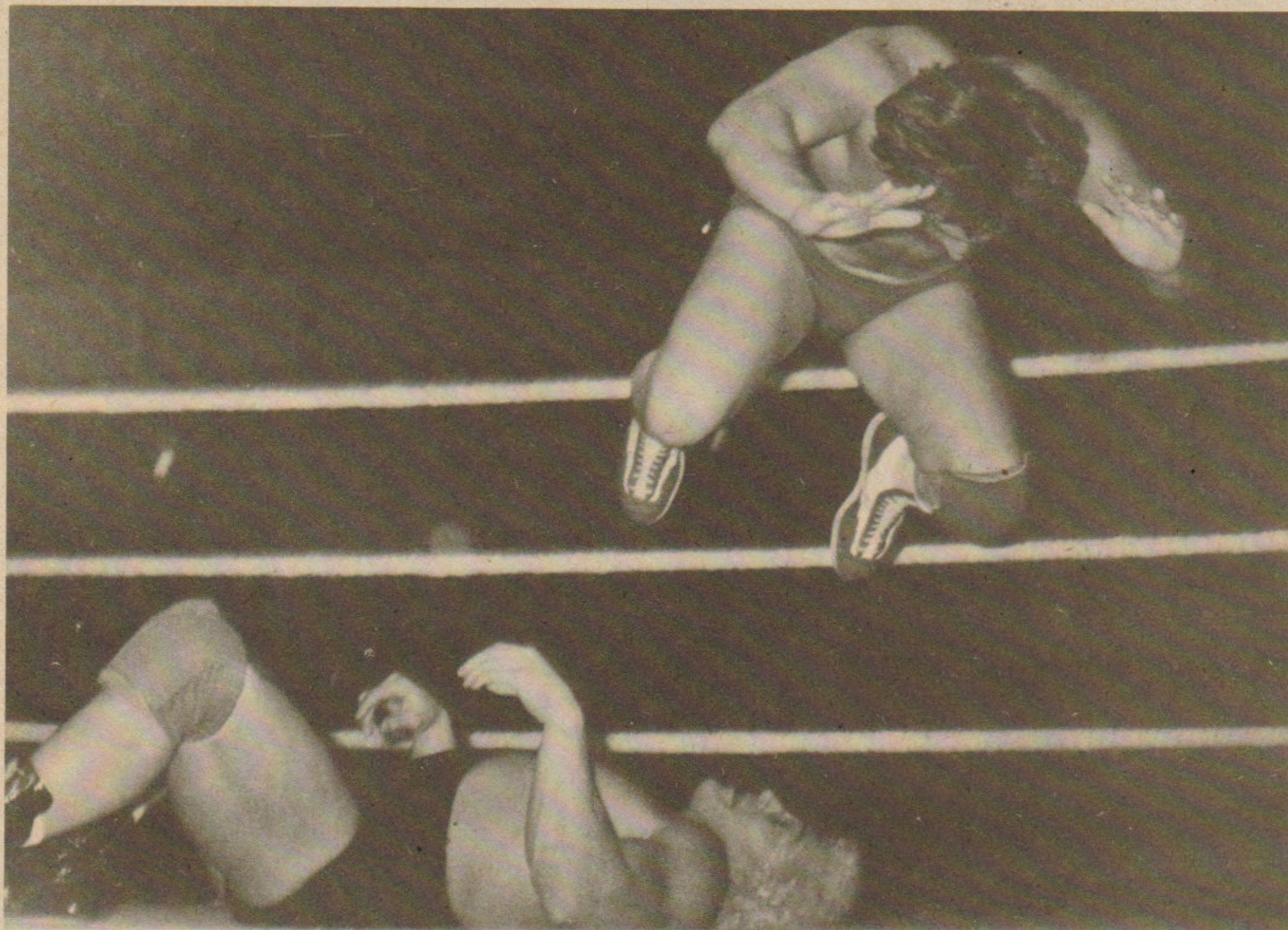
Q: Would you elaborate?

A: Oh sure, well, growing up and all, I had certain dreams you know, when you're a kid, you have dreams and they're rarely in tune with reality. You imagine yourself conquering worlds with little effort at all. When you dream, you never even consider the remote possibility of failure. All you think about are the



TED DiBIASE

POLL ANY GROUP of wrestling fans or journalists about their choice as future superstar and the name of Ted DiBiase invariably emerges near the top of the list. Strong yet compassionate, DiBiase has parlayed ring ferocity and poised temperament into a rapidly rising reputation. Currently in Georgia, DiBiase makes no attempt to conceal his ultimate ambitions.



A flying kneedrop by DiBiase ends Ken Patera's reign as Missouri state champion. Ted is hoping that the tradition of Missouri champs fighting their way to the NWA title will continue.

glorious future moments, never the tough times in between, which, by the way, you damn well need if you'll ever succeed.

Q: You need failure to gain success?

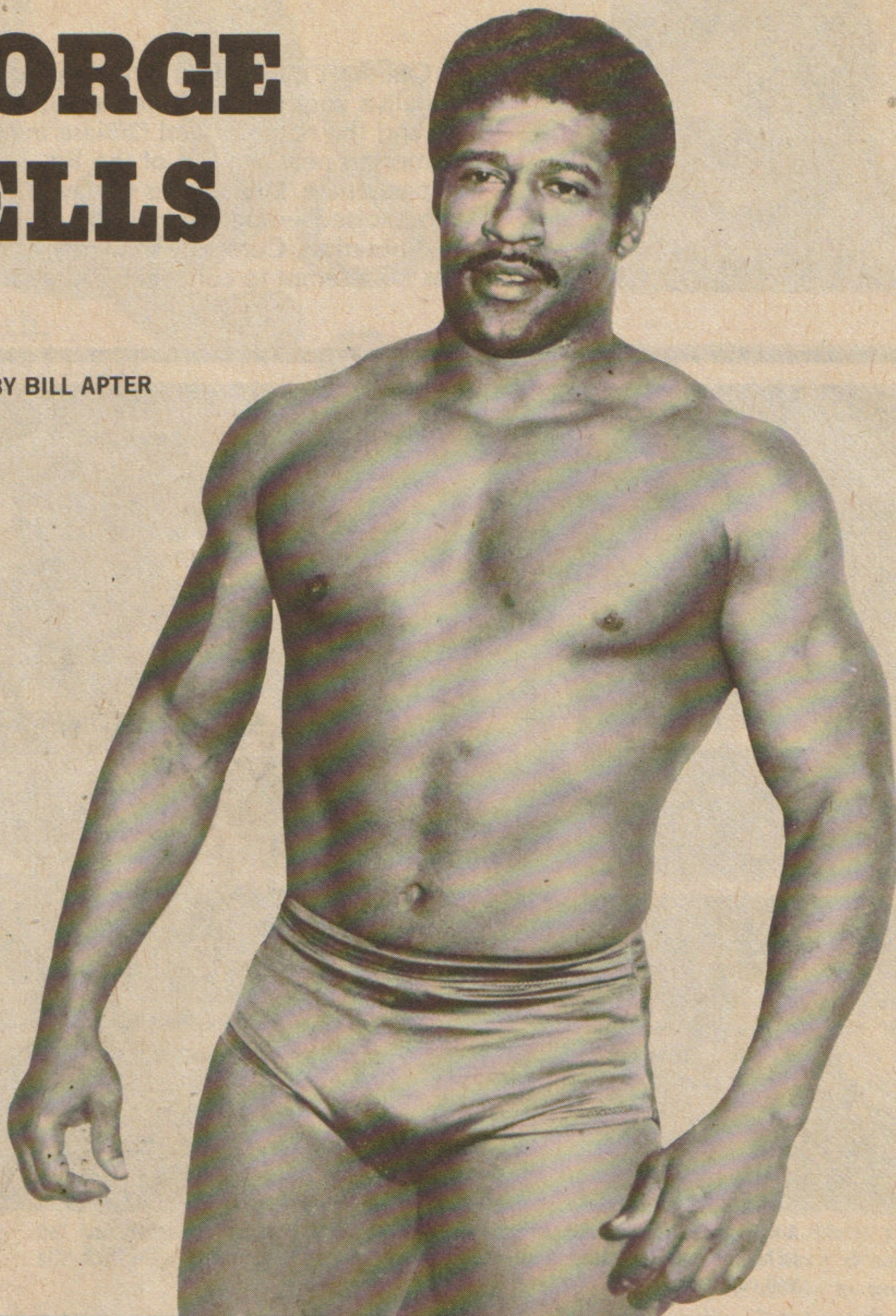
A: In a sense, yeah. After I left the WWF, without a major title, I might add, I got kinda of angry and upset. In my dreams, I was WWF champion, understand? What I didn't know, at that time,

was how much I was learning by the nightly struggles.

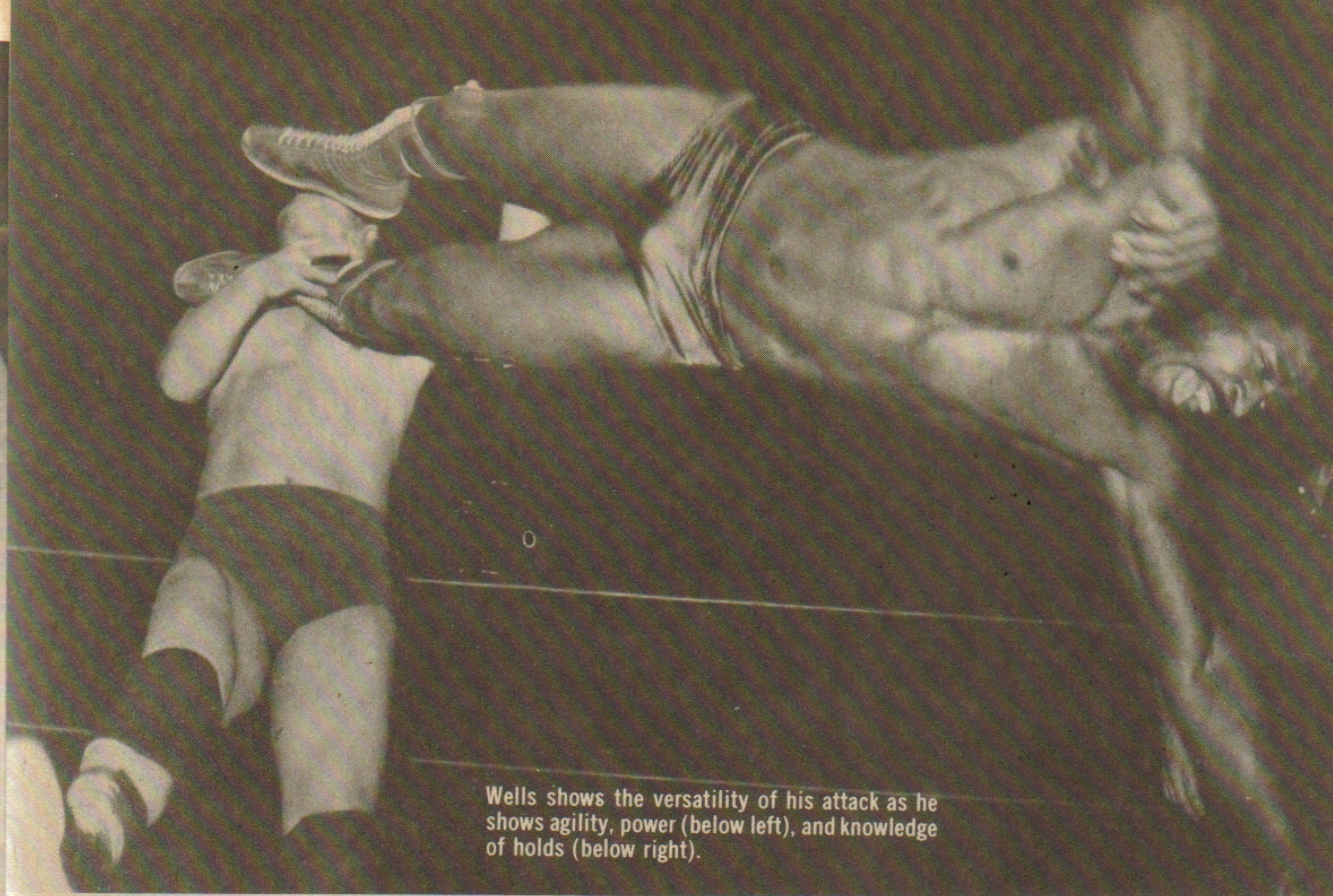
Q: But you did win a major title not long after that, the North American heavy-
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INTRODUCING GEORGE WELLS

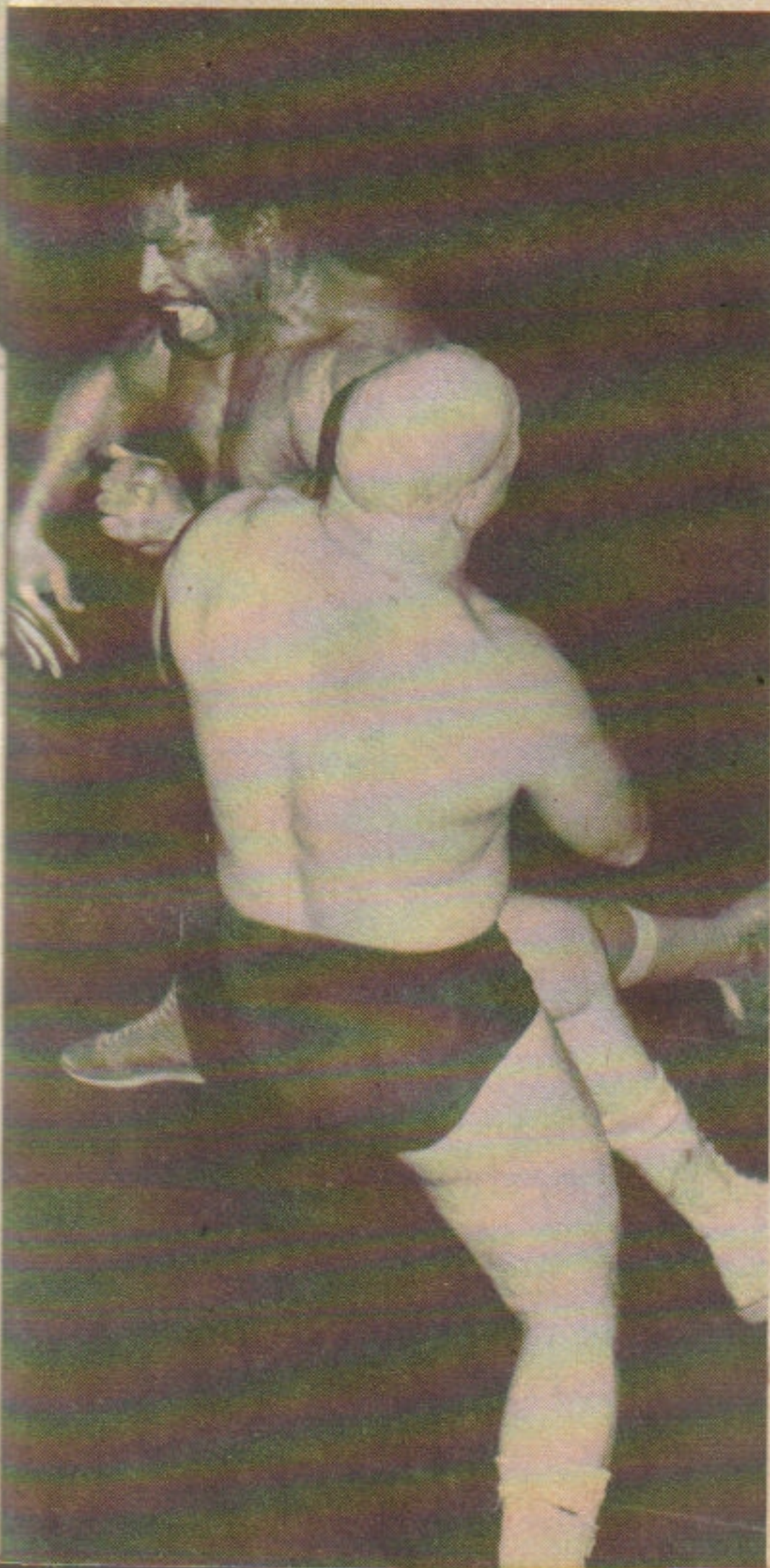
PHOTOS BY BILL APTER



Rarely in recent memory has a wrestler come into the Mid-Atlantic and set off the fireworks in the manner of George Wells. He is dashing and tough. He is daring. He is courageous. Along with Dewey Robertson, Wells is co-holder of the Mid-Atlantic tag team title. This following article provides the background to one of wrestling's most exciting athletes



Wells shows the versatility of his attack as he shows agility, power (below left), and knowledge of holds (below right).



GEORGE WELLS IS proud of the fact he's both a former professional football player and rising star in the Mid-Atlantic area. But trying to keep the versatile wrestler talking on just one aspect of his career proves quite difficult.

"I got into football when I was at Oakland Technical High School," said Wells, a big man at 6-2, 245 pounds. "Then I played football at Laney Junior College and finished

up at New Mexico State University.

"Mostly I played defensive lineman. I loved to rush the quarterback, bash through a tackle or guard, and knock the quarterback on his rump. Nothing gives a defensive lineman greater joy than smashing through for a sack."

Wells played eight years in the Canadian Football League. All-League five times, Wells still holds the CFL record for most individual quarterback sacks in a single season.

"I played on three really fine clubs, the Toronto Argonauts, the Hamilton Tiger Cats, and the Saskatchewan Roughriders," said Wells. "But the greatest single feeling I ever got was playing on a championship team."

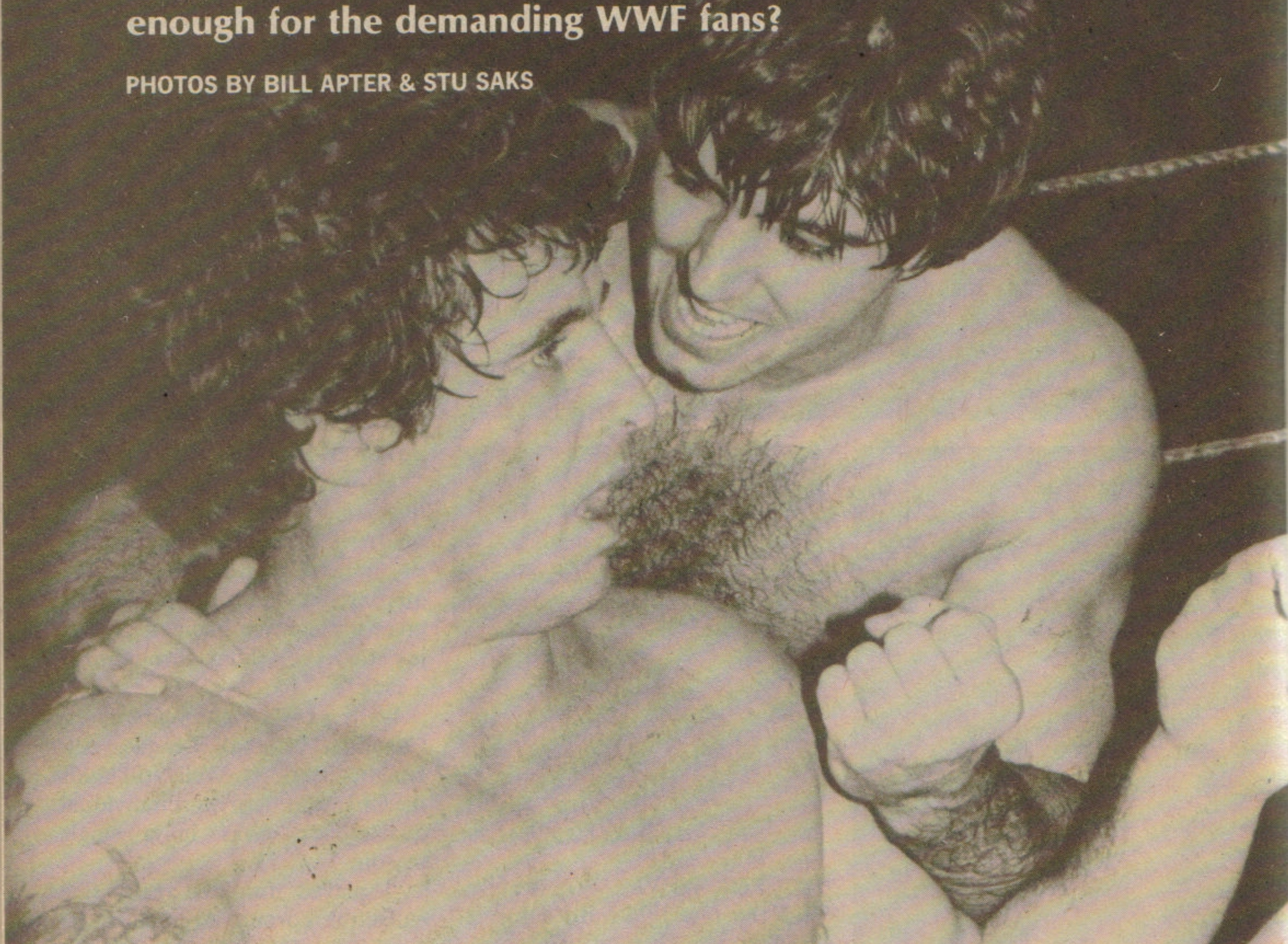
During his career, Wells played on three Grey Cup champions, the CFL equivalent to a Super Bowl winner.

Yet Wells' title realizations
(Continued on page 62)

GAREA & MARTEL | IS GREATNESS GOOD ENOUGH?

Tony Garea and Rick Martel, current WWF tag team champions, face a disturbing, perhaps ultimately destructive problem. All concur on their obvious skills. Some consider them brilliant. But how do the fans react? Will the team of Garea and Martel be enough for the demanding WWF fans?

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER & STU SAKS



TWO WRESTLING REPORTERS finished another round and ordered more bourbon. Sober, they'd been unable to solve the riddle. Maybe the magic of bourbon would reveal the solution. They knew that theory was nonsense, but the discussion already

deteriorated to nonsense long ago.

"Let's go over it again," one said as they waited for the bartender to pour another round. "Tony Garea and Rick Martel are the WWF tag team champions. They're great."

"No argument there."

"Okay, no argument. They move with agility, they're powerful, work well together, and bring honor to the sport. They should be known as one of the greatest tag teams ever. Yet, the fans don't think of them like that. Why?"

"Because the fans don't feel

they're one of the greatest ever. Real greatness has to be felt. You can know something logically, but you don't believe it unless you feel it. The fans don't feel Martel and Garea are tops. Y'know something, neither do I."

"Neither do I. Why?"

"I don't know. This is the part we can't figure out. We do all right until we get to the why of the thing. What keeps us from *feeling* Garea and Martel are great.

The bartender filled the glasses. Staring at the pouring bourbon, one of the reporters cracked, "More magic."

All of a sudden the other reporter bolted upright. "That's the answer!" he shouted. "You're a genius!"

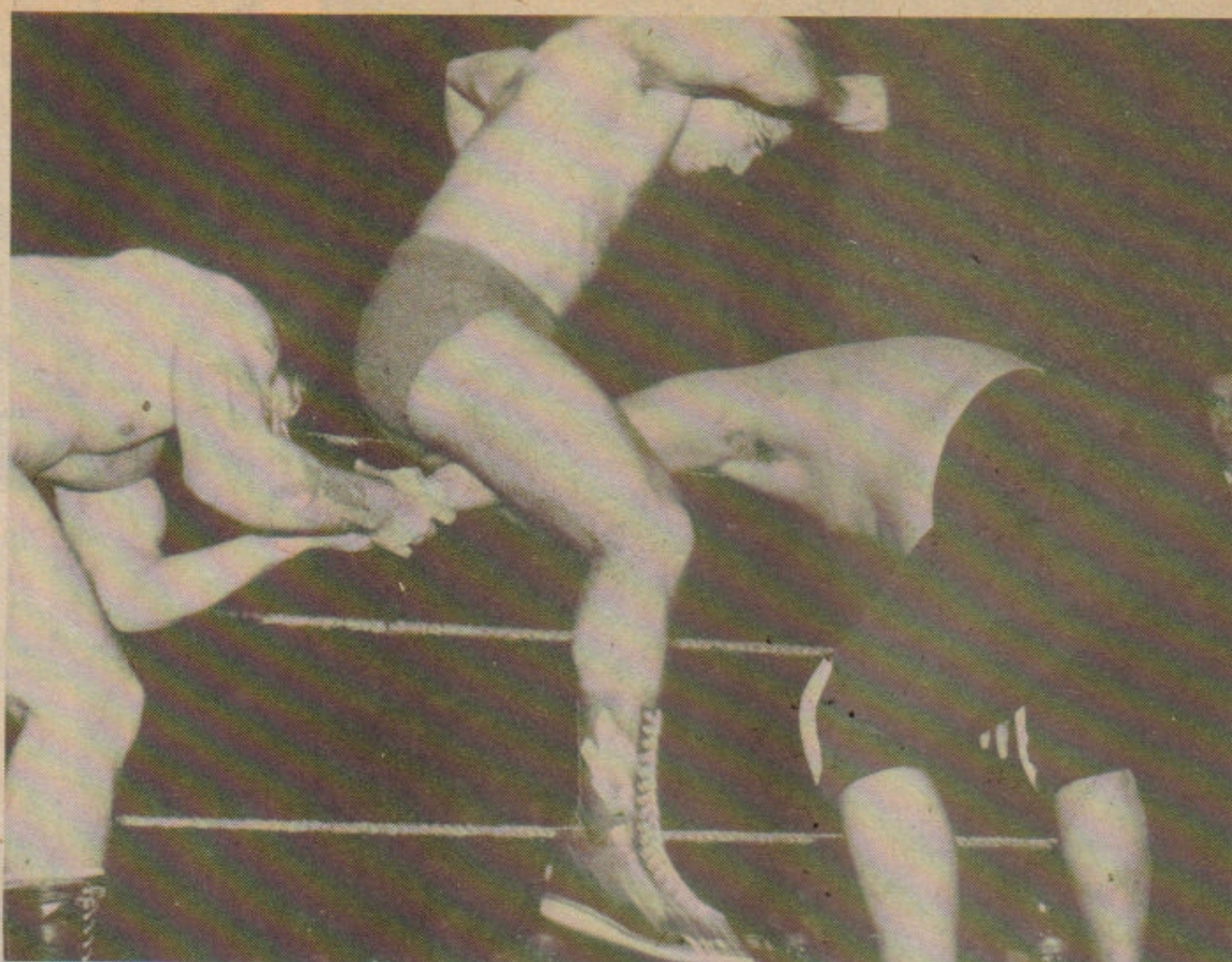
"I know I'm a genius. Why am I a genius?"

"Magic."

"Let's go home. I think you've had enough. And I don't want to keep drinking until I can understand you."

"Buy yourself another drink, genius, and listen. Real greatness, *felt* greatness, is magic. You can't add it up like a mathematical equation. It would be easier to explain the color red to a blind man. Either it's there or it's not. Magic is as good a word as any to describe what can't be explained."

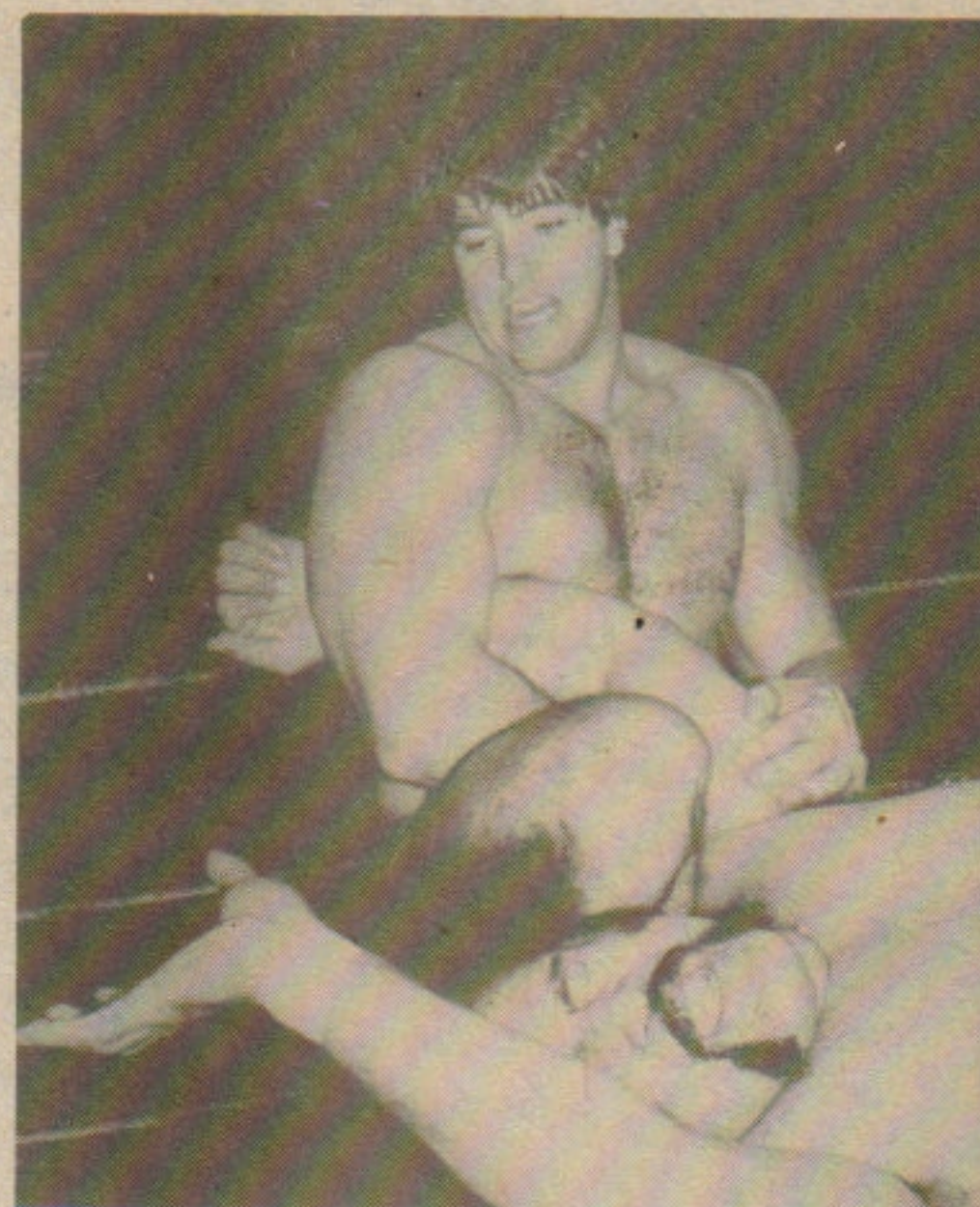
His companion mulled it over for a moment. "Magic. I am a genius. Let's drink to it."



The WWF tag team champions go to work on Afa the Samoan's left arm. As Garea holds tight, Martel takes a running leap over his back and onto the arm (above). Rick applies an armbar (right).

They ordered another round. Then one of the men wondered, "Why don't they have magic. If any team deserves to have magic, they do. They're the most honorable two guys I've ever met. You want them to succeed. Wrestling is better because they succeed."

"That has nothing to do with it," his friend mourned. "Honor and talent are admirable, but that doesn't make magic. For example, no one would ever call The Sheik honorable. It's a



disgrace to wrestling that he's successful. Yet, you can't deny the man is magic. He enters a ring and you can't take your eyes off him. Something about the man commands attention. I bet you can remember specific instances in about 50 of his matches."

"Easy." His friend smiled at the memories, then frowned. "I can't do that with Garea and Martel. Without trying, I can recall The Sheik's maneuvers. But I have to try to remember that tag team's best moments."

(Continued on page 48)



Garea will not allow Moondog Rex to tag King into the match.

MAJOR INDOOR SOCCER
LEAGUE ALL-STAR GAME
WED. FEB. 11 - 7:00 PM



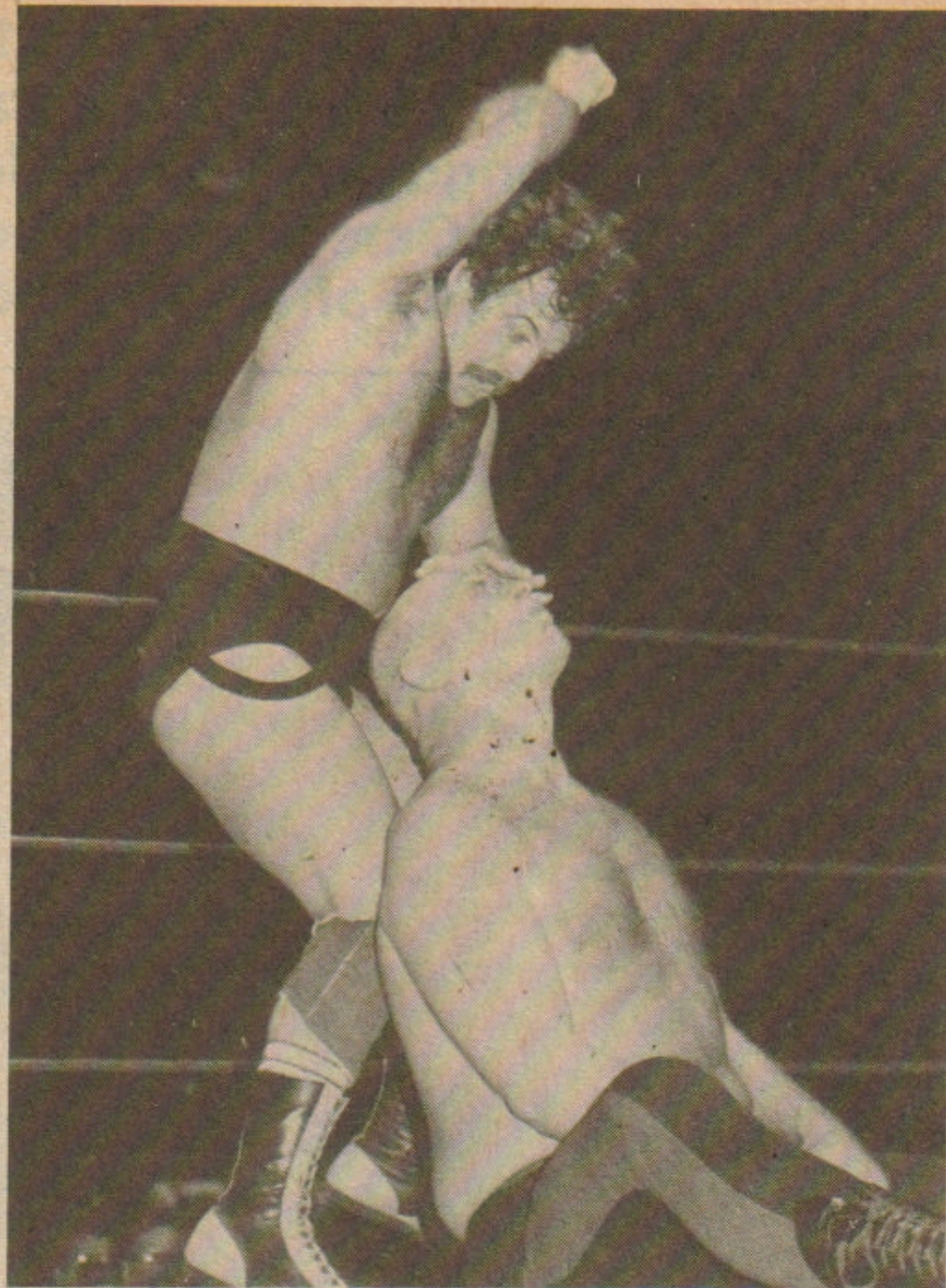
MIKE GRAHAM- IN TROUBLE ON HIS OWN

PHOTOS BY
BILL OTTEN

Mike Graham continues his struggle to the top of the Florida wrestling ladder. And this struggle is a lonely one. Many now wonder whether Graham can make it on his own, or whether his subtle genius will be lost amid the broken limbs of potential



Mike Graham is now going through the difficult task of changing his entire approach to his profession. No longer is his father there to guide him. He has taken his share of lumps, but he is succeeding. After resisting Baron Von Raschke's clawhold (above), Mike takes full command (right and below):



IT FEELS STRANGEST at the end of the night. Carrying his equipment bag, Mike Graham walks alone through the parking lot. He gets in his car and drives off. The only sounds besides his breathing is the car radio.

That's when the loneliness sometimes feels like a fist squeezing in the pit of his belly. Since he was a freshman on the high school wrestling team, Mike always had his father watching his matches. Afterwards, Eddie Graham would go over the match with his son, praising the successes and analyzing the failures.

This ritual continued for years. Even when Mike wrestled professionally, Eddie was always there with insights and encouragements. Eddie also guided his son's career. Using his veteran's intelligence, Eddie kept Mike from making the mistakes of inexperience. Mike's career was on sure and steady footing.

Then Eddie retired. Mike felt



like a kite whose string had broken. All of a sudden, he had no one to guide him. Neither he nor his father realized how much Mike had come to depend on Eddie's guidance. For the first few months, the problem wasn't evident. Then slowly but surely, Mike's career lost direction. Mike seemed to be going every

which way but right.

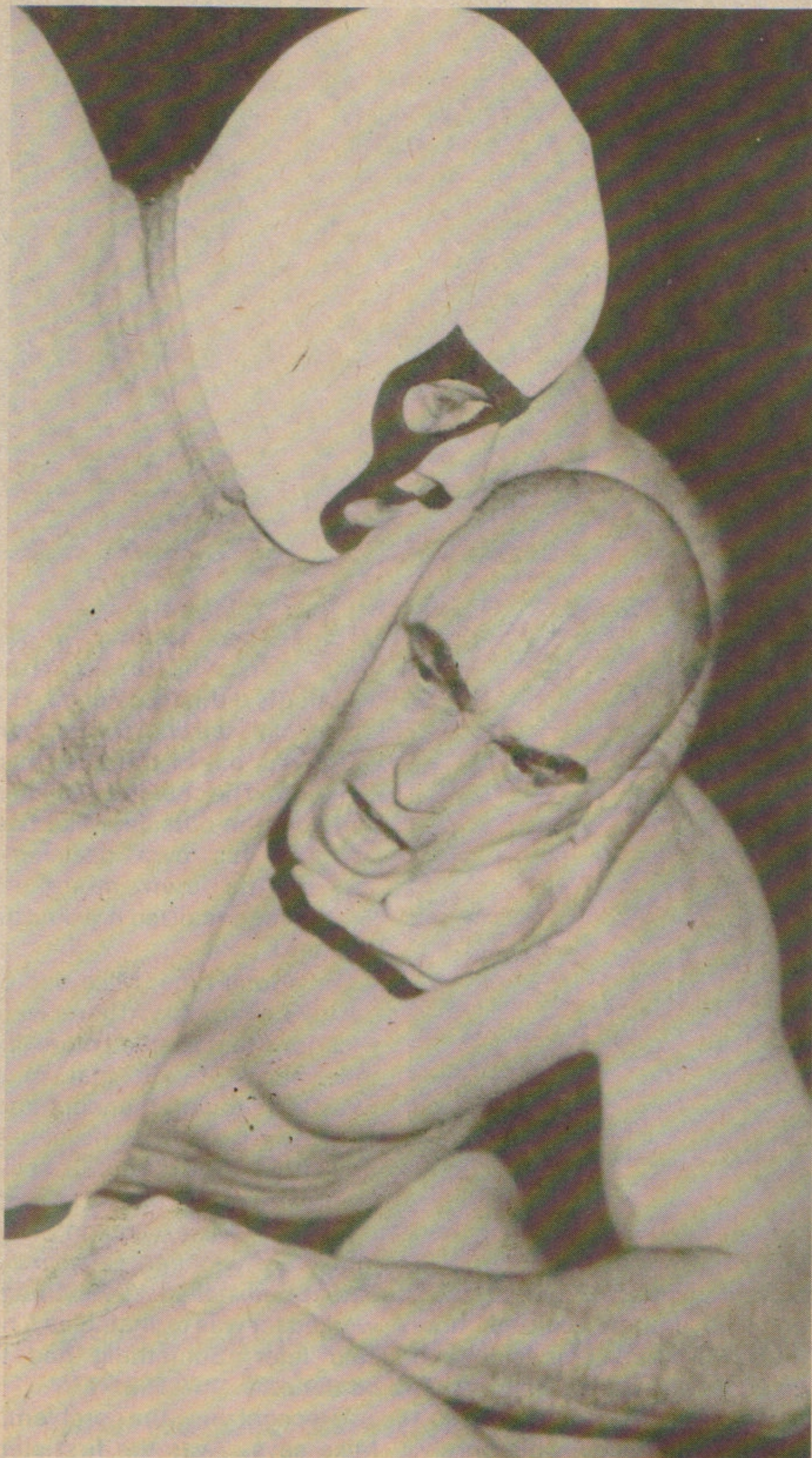
Things kept getting worse. Mike took matches that repeatedly did him no good. His father still talked to him, but Eddie was out of the business. Eddie knew he couldn't guide his son from the outside. Mike had to make his own decisions, correct his own mistakes. Neither man realized it would be this hard.

For a long time, Mike denied he was in trouble. There were vacations that seemed more like retirements, feuds that most wrestlers couldn't understand, and risks that made no sense. Still, Mike would say, "I know what I'm doing."

Finally, Mike couldn't kid himself any longer. He saw his career had stalled. "Everything I worked for was in shambles," he said later. Something had to be done.

"Recognizing the problem," Mike says, "was the first step. Friends say it's courageous to
(Continued on page 49)

Leave it to wily Don Carson to discover a silver lining in what should have been a bleak day in his wrestler's career. Even though Mongolian Stomper lost the match to Mr. Wrestling II, both he and Carson claim they actually won the match. Their threats directly affect II, if not all of Georgia wrestling



As bad as things looked for The Mongolian Stomper in his match against Mr. Wrestling II, Stomper's manager, Don Carson, feels his man was the real "winner."

THE PROJECTOR HUMMED its apparently bleak message onto the huge white screen occupying nearly half the wall in Don Carson's living room. On film, The Mongolian Stomper tumbled against the ropes, nearly destroyed by a Mr. Wrestling II blow.

"Oh boy, look at that, isn't that swell?" Carson slapped his knee in glee. Stomper nodded with satisfaction.

THE MA STOM

Further action revealed Stomper prone against the ropes, barely able to defend himself against a II forearm smash.

"Wasn't that great?" chuckled Carson. Stomper grunted and nodded.

Yet another sequence of action showed Stomper struggling vainly inside a II headlock.

"Ah, you were great," said Carson. Stomper nodded in silent agreement and switched off the film.

"Well, well, wasn't my man great, terrific, didn't he just do the very greatest job in that there ring, huh, tell me, you ever seen anyone so gifted, so skilled, so brilliant in your whole life as that guy?" Carson shouted at his specially invited guest. The visitor shook his head in total bewilderment and asked how Carson could assess such a match, even given his obvious prejudice, and decide Stomper had done splendidly.

"Hah, hah, you are pretty thick, aren't you, really thick, can't figure it out, well, well, not surprised, what should I expect," gushed Carson. "If II couldn't figure it out, why should you?"

With shrinking patience, the visitor asked Carson exactly what he was talking about.

"Didn't you see? We fooled old man II, plucked his eyebrows right outta his fool head," laughed Carson. "My man Stomper never had the slightest intention of fighting back in this match. We went into this match determined to make II show us every single one of his maneuvers.

"The whole point was a scouting mission. Now we know exactly what II will do in every possible

situation. We can anticipate and plan for that. There's nothing he could do to surprise us," said Carson.

Stomper grunted and stood in the center of the room, arms folded, expression severe to the point of threatening.

"Look at this man, look at this physical specimen, this finely tuned war machine and tell me how he could possibly lose to a weak-kneed has-been like II unless we wanted him to lose," said Carson.

"Stomper never loses. He is a great, talented, brilliant man who can destroy everything in his path. All he has to do is show up. But we wanted to suck II dry of all his maneuvers. We wanted every single aspect of his wrestling game

on film, subject to our viewing at any time. That was how we proceeded into this match. That was our objective and that is what we achieved."

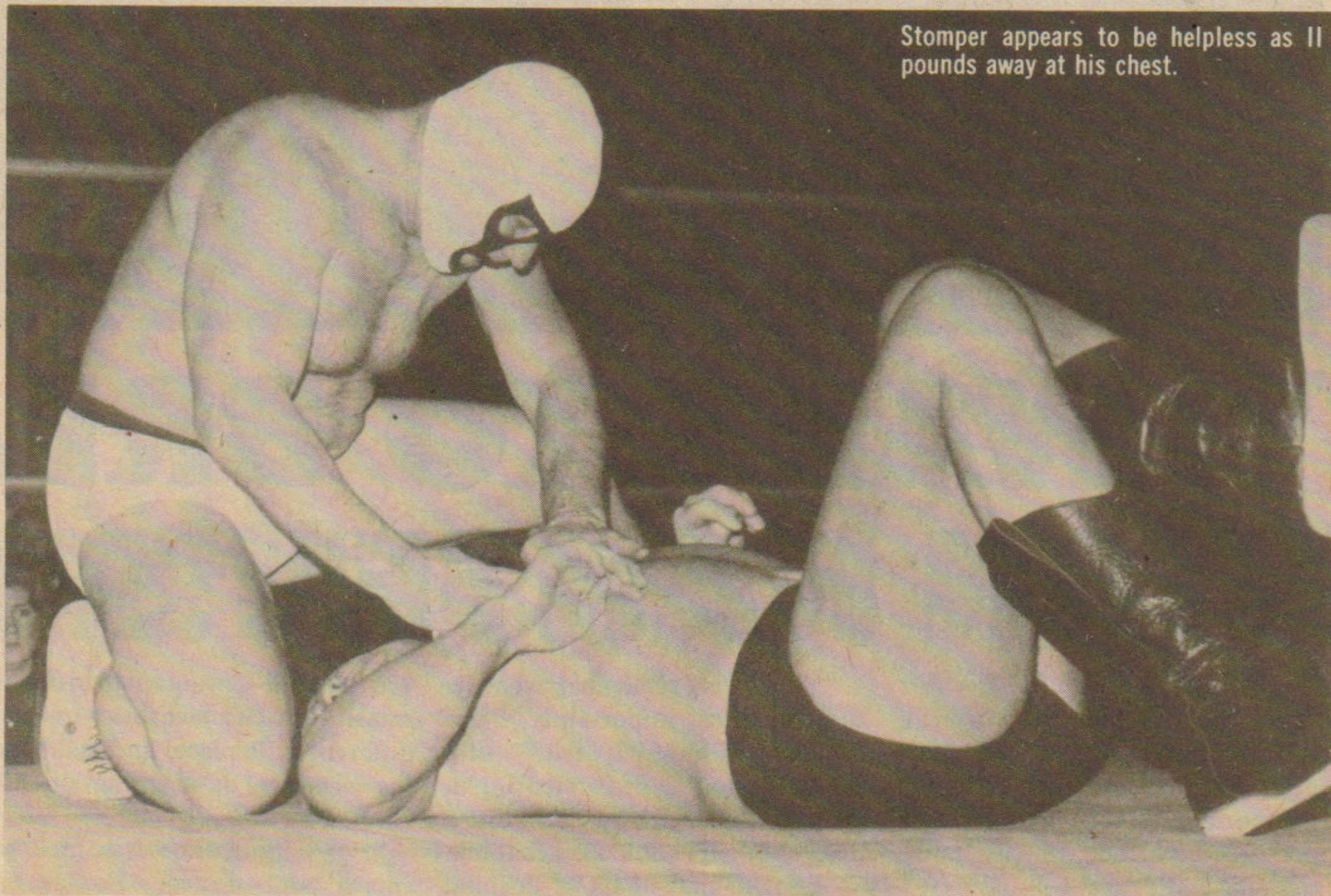
Carson bounded erect and paced around the room, seized by his own self-perceived brilliance.

"Yes, I must admit, it was my inspiration, my motivation, my vision which prompted this stunning strategy. It just came to me in the middle of the night, this remarkable way to deceive II, to not only get all his maneuvers down but to embarrass him and show the world how he has fallen and how he only stays on his feet through bribing referees and threatening wrestlers," said Carson.

(Continued on page 55)

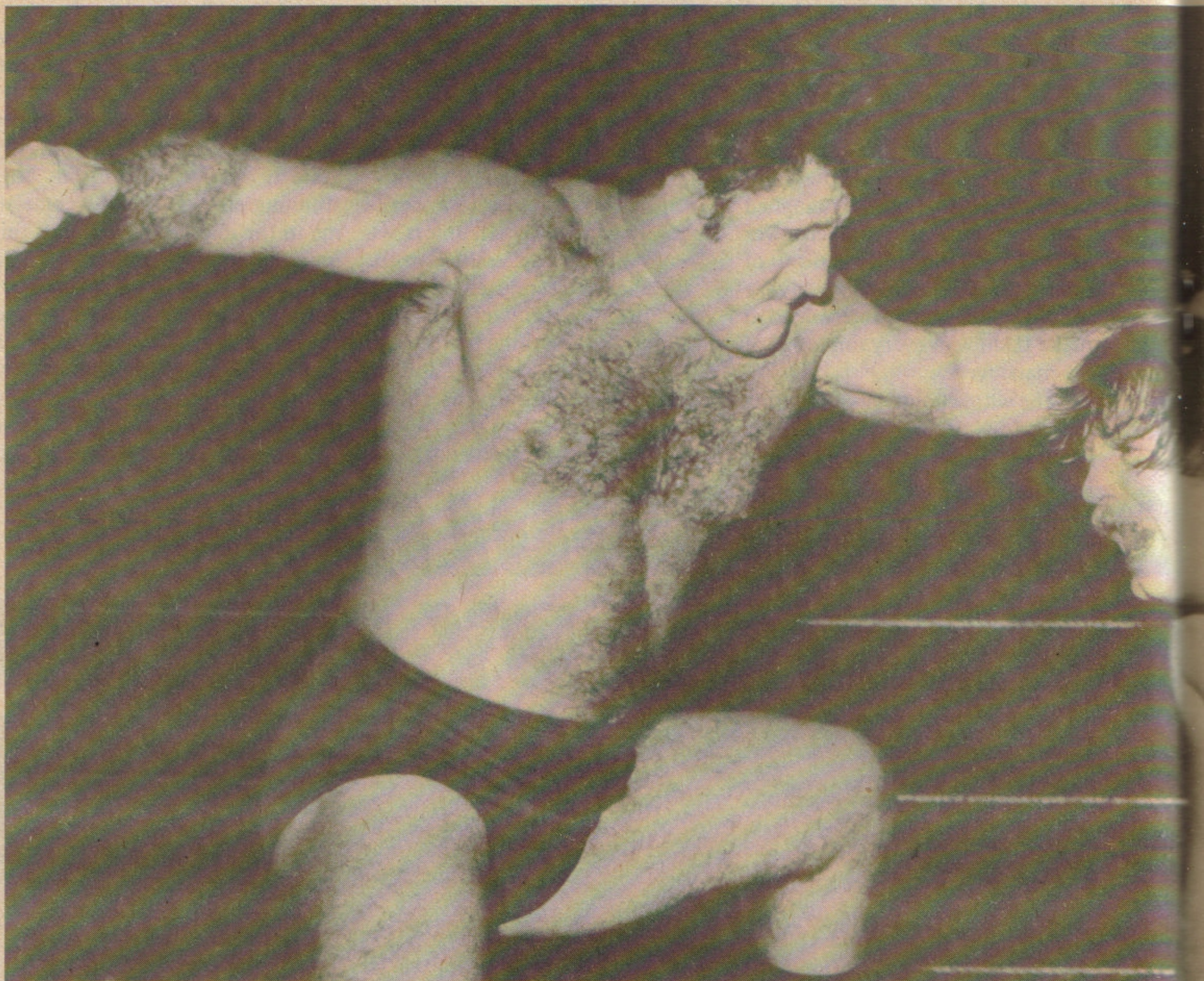
ATCH MONGOLIAN IPER WON BY LOSING

PHOTOS BY
MAGGIE ADKINS



Stomper appears to be helpless as II pounds away at his chest.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO



"I WANT TO BREAK STAN HANSEN'S NECK"

IT REQUIRES LITTLE effort for Bruno Sammartino to recall the night Stan Hansen broke his neck. That memory walks beside the former WWF champion, a persistent partner in his every thought and action.

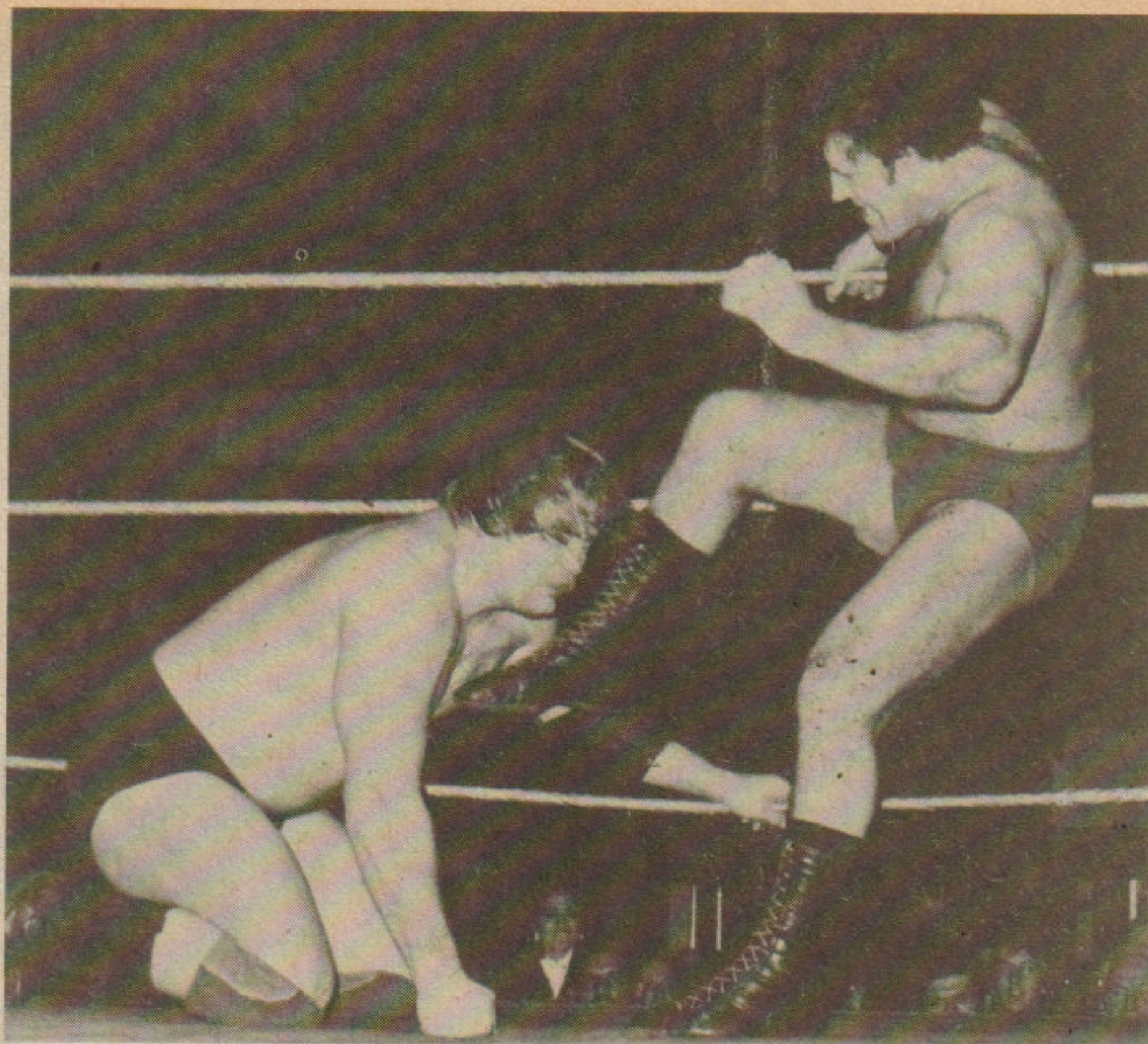
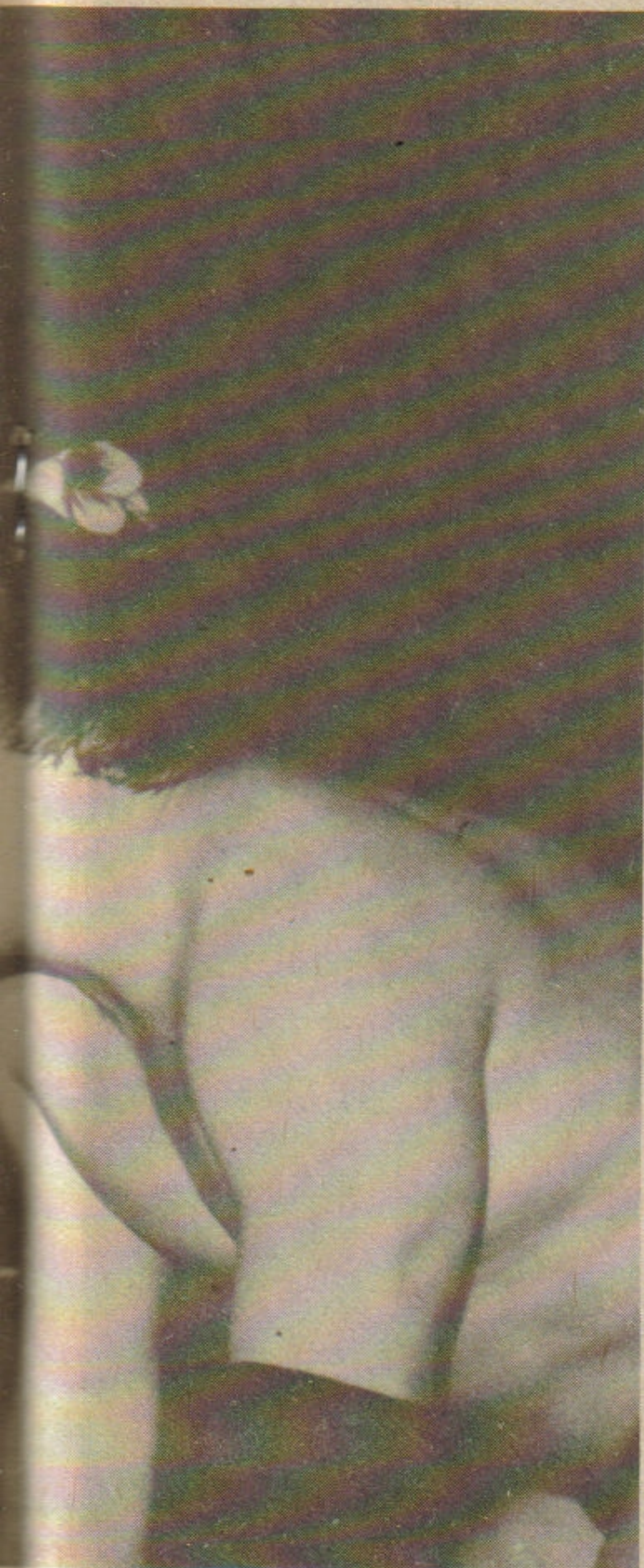
"Yes, I can remember what he did. But most importantly, I can remember how I felt," said Sammartino, his brow creasing in an embittered frown. "I was so doggone mad I couldn't even think."

"I sat in that doggone hospital

bed and all I wanted to do was smash Hansen's face into a million different little pieces and just have the pleasure of stepping on his chest.

"For a long time I wanted to smash and destroy Hansen. I

INO:



Bruno holds Hansen in place by the hair and fires a sweeping right at his exposed neck (left). Bruno, seeking revenge for his broken neck, has never been more intent on injuring a man. Bruno shows his placekicking style with Hansen's head as the football (above).

Though his neck has healed, the bitter memory of that night when Stan Hansen purposely and sadistically broke Bruno Sammartino's neck has left a seething scar upon the Living Legend's mind. Sammartino has his opportunity to avenge that horrible night. Nothing will stand in his way

K ECK!"

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

wanted to give him the kind of pain he gave me. That is all I thought about.

"But, you know, I started worrying about my feelings. I thought I would go crazy from hate. I have seen many a man go

crazy from hatred, just go berserk and not be able to think or do anything.

"So I tried to calm down, tried to keep everything in perspective. And then that doggone creep comes back into the WWF and starts looking for trouble. I tell you, he will be a very sorry man when I get finished with him," said Bruno.

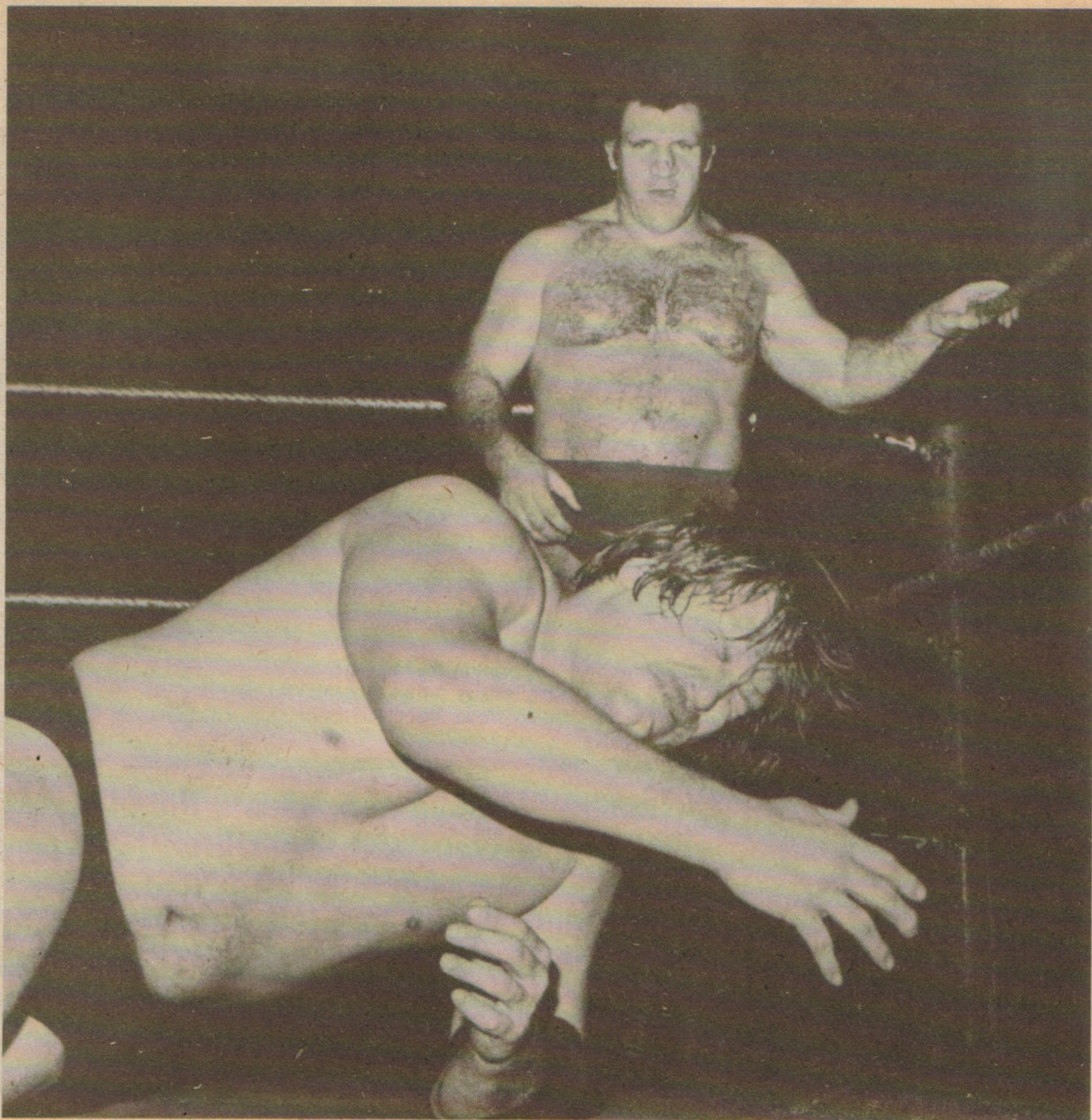
Hansen's infamous lariat hold has caused more injuries than any maneuver in the history of wrestling. According to several wrestling historians, Hansen's

maneuvers rank with the most vicious in the sport.

However, Hansen doesn't view his move as being anything more than a way to achieve an end.

"My lariat hold is so damn good that the whole lousy world is afraid of it," said Hansen. "Ain't my fault others don't know how to handle it. Hell, I do kinda feel sorry for Sammartino. At his age, he shouldn't be in wrestlin'. He should be tryin' his hand at some other kinda job.

"But what else could he do? He ain't exactly bright, mind you. I



Though it appears that Bruno is showing mercy by backing off his foe, he is not. Bruno is giving Hansen a chance to get to his feet so he could drive him back to the canvas again.

"When you try and think about it, Sammartino might want to thank me. He ain't smart enough to realize when to get out out of heard he got the IQ of a tree. I couldn't think of anythin' else Bruno could do 'cept embarrass himself in the ring like he does night after night," said Hansen, shrugging. "Maybe I'm kinda doin' a public service by comin' in here and wipin' the floor with his ugly face.

wrestlin' so I'm just givin' him a little nudge, sort of, to get his butt out of the ring and into a nursing home where he belongs. Like I said, I'm kinda hard-pressed to think of anythin' else the old bum could do."

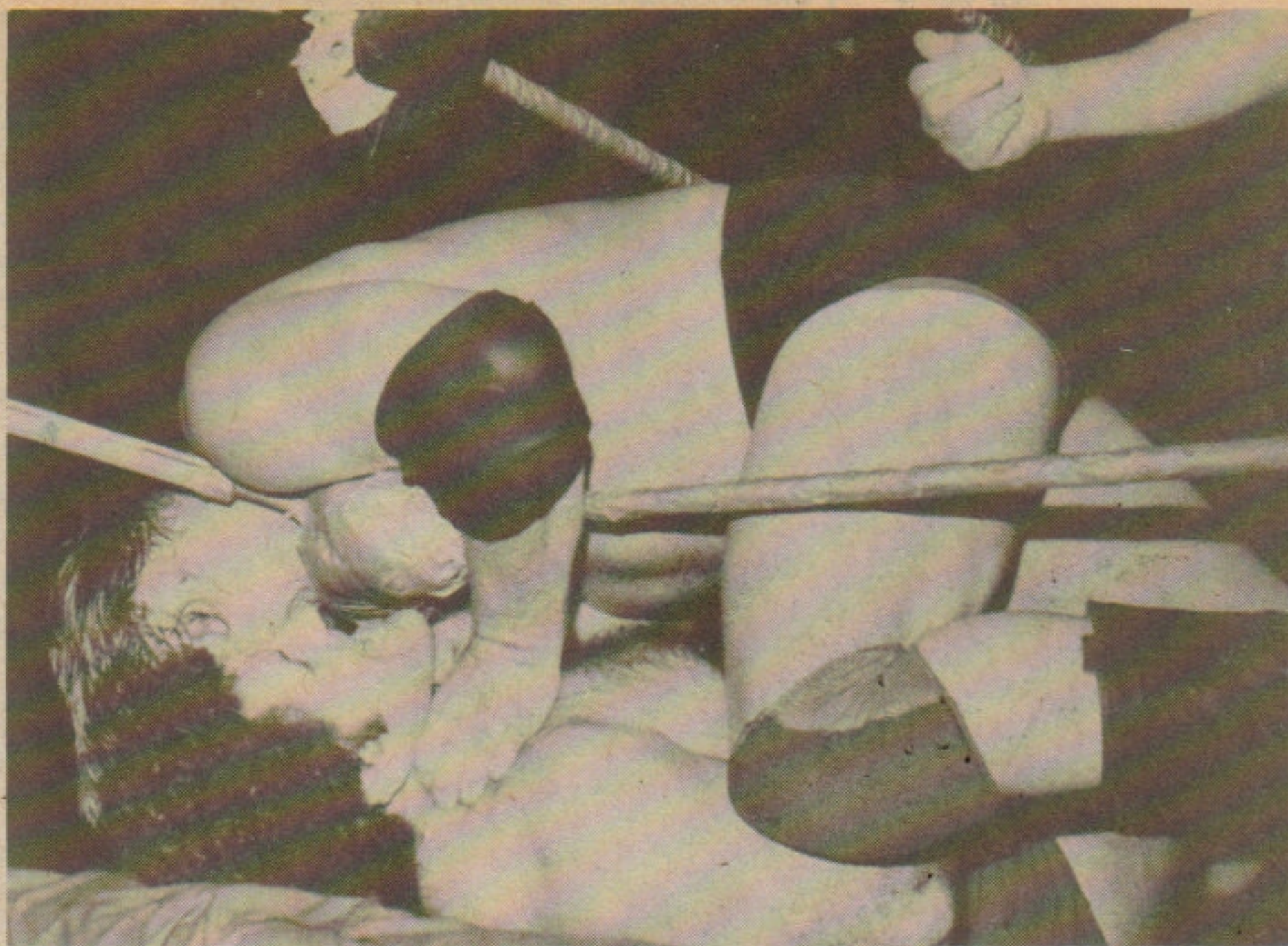
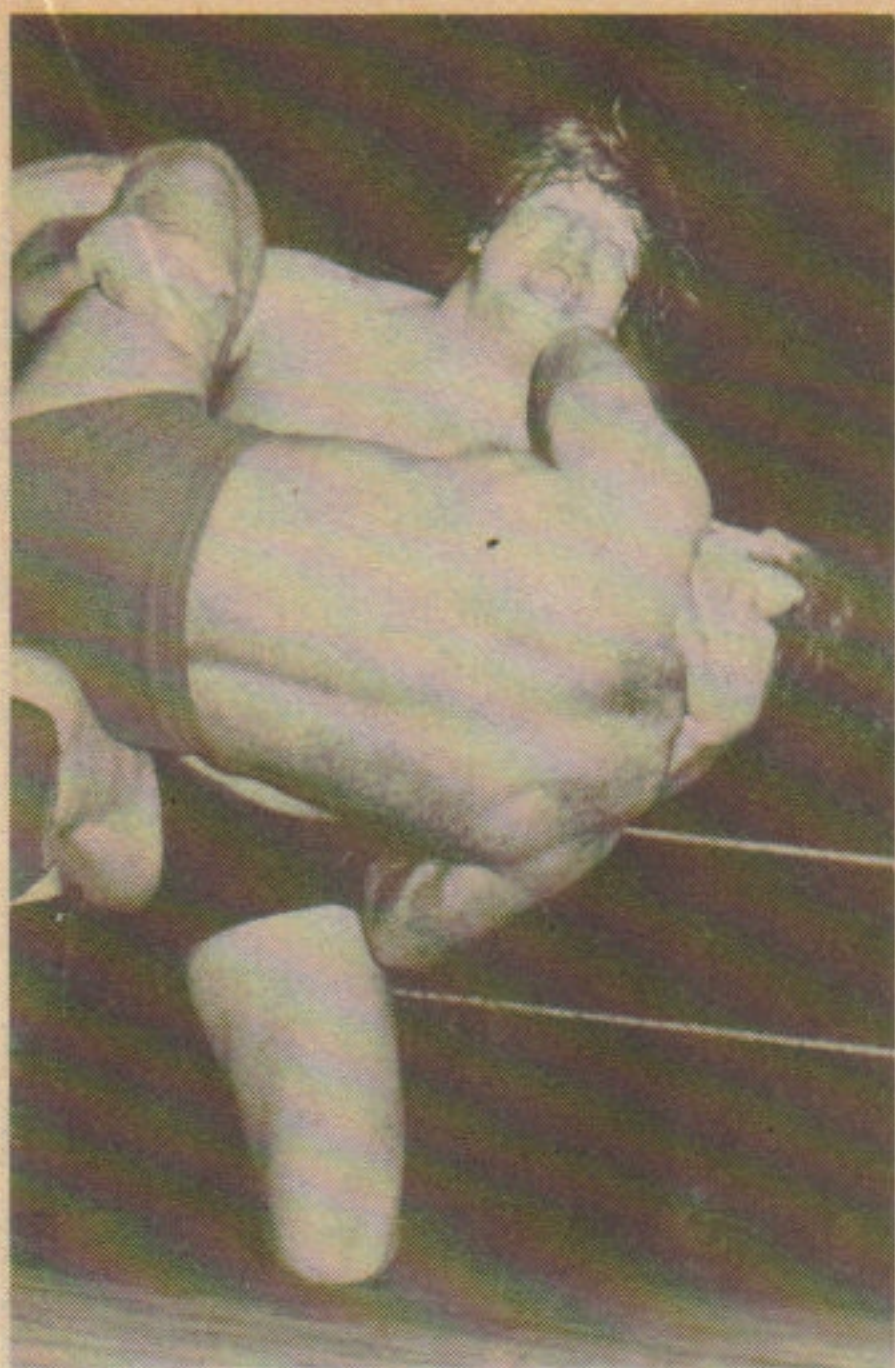
What about declaring total and unconditional war on Mr. Stan Hansen?

"You know, I am getting angry all over again," yelled Sammartino. "Doggone, when will

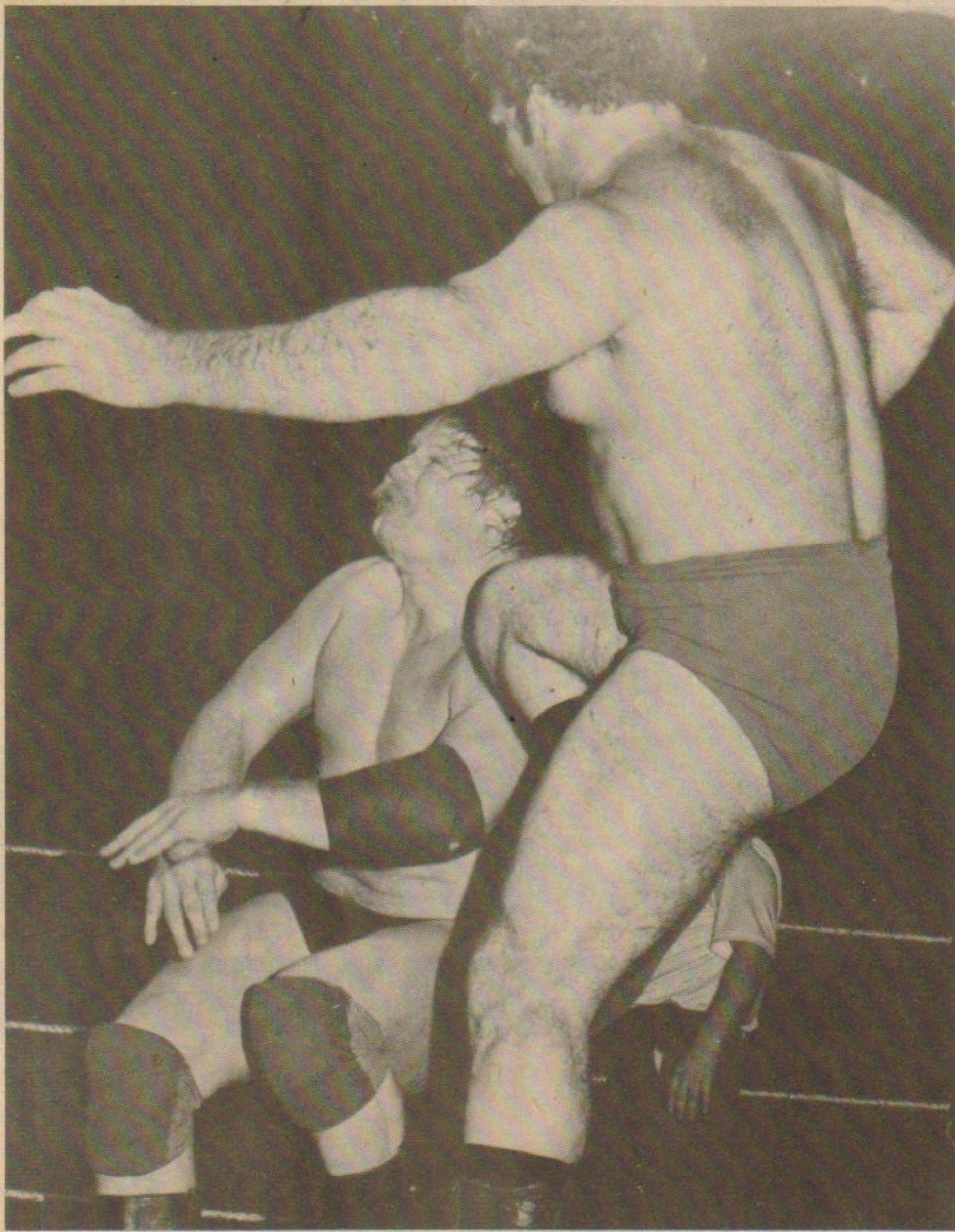
the Zbyszkos and Hansens of the world understand they can't just get away with anything they want? I want to break Stan Hansen's neck!"

Sammartino forced calm upon himself, though by his shaking fists and narrowed eyes, the effort failed.

"You have to set an example for things," he said. "You have to show people they can't break the rules and doggone hurt others and just break necks and this and that



Hansen lifts Sammartino in the air and drops his tailbone painfully across his knee (above left). The referee very nearly had to disqualify Hansen for choking the former WWF champion (above right). Hansen staggers across the ring after being hit hard by a Bruno Sammartino kneelift (below).



without paying a price.

"Maybe I am sounding too high-handed. Maybe people are going to say that Bruno Sammartino is just taking this noble path to cover up for all the hate he has for Hansen. Well, you know, I won't deny I hate the man. I won't try and fool anyone and say that I don't want Hansen's neck broken just for the feeling of vengeance it would give me.

"But a man must sometimes break out of his own emotions and look back and see if he can do good with hate. Maybe that is a contradiction and there is nothing good that can ever come from hate. Maybe thinking you can break someone's neck to pay him back for breaking your neck and to show others they cannot just do what they want or say what they want or treat people bad is just one big self-deception.

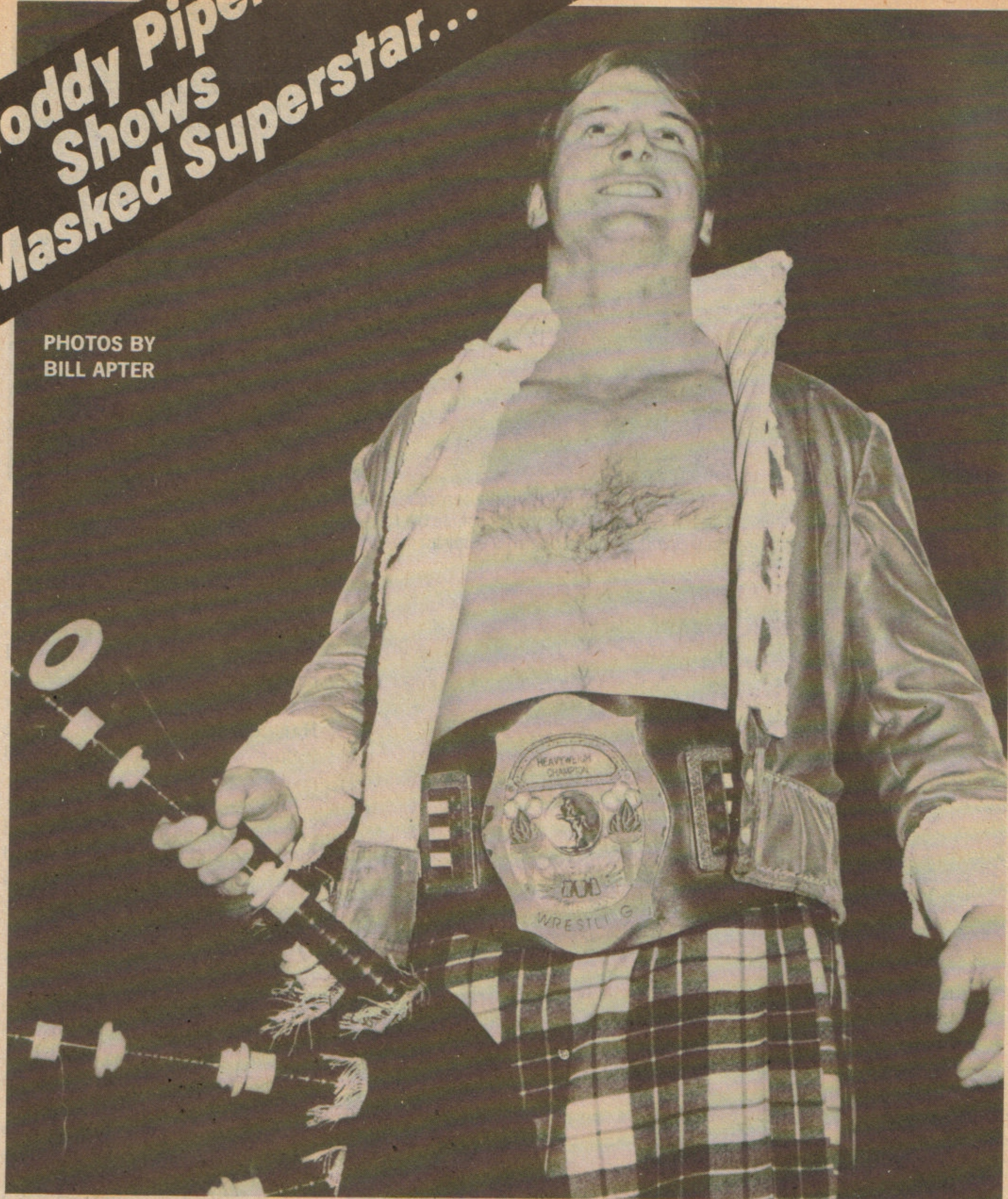
"Doggone, maybe Bruno Sammartino will be fooling himself. But I must try. The worst that could happen is that I'll fail. I don't think I will. I think I'll get that bum and knock him all over the WWF," said Sammartino.

Whether Sammartino is, indeed, fooling himself remains to be seen. But what fan would berate him for wanting to pay back Stan Hansen?

Nobody. □

**Roddy Piper
Shows
Masked Superstar...**

PHOTOS BY
BILL APTER



**HOW A SMART CHAMPION
WILL
NEVER LOSE HIS TITLE**

WELL, IT WASN'T exactly the Rope-a-Dope, but it served the same purpose.

"Nothing actually," said Roddy Piper, U.S. heavyweight champion. "I can't fathom all the fuss. I have been telling all you people who, obviously don't have the mental faculties needed to comprehend my intellect, that I am the smartest wrestling champion who ever lived.

"That I could trick a buffoon like Masked Superstar shouldn't startle anyone with half a mind, which, by the way, rules out the majority of wrestling writers and fans," said Piper, sneering.

This is what happened.

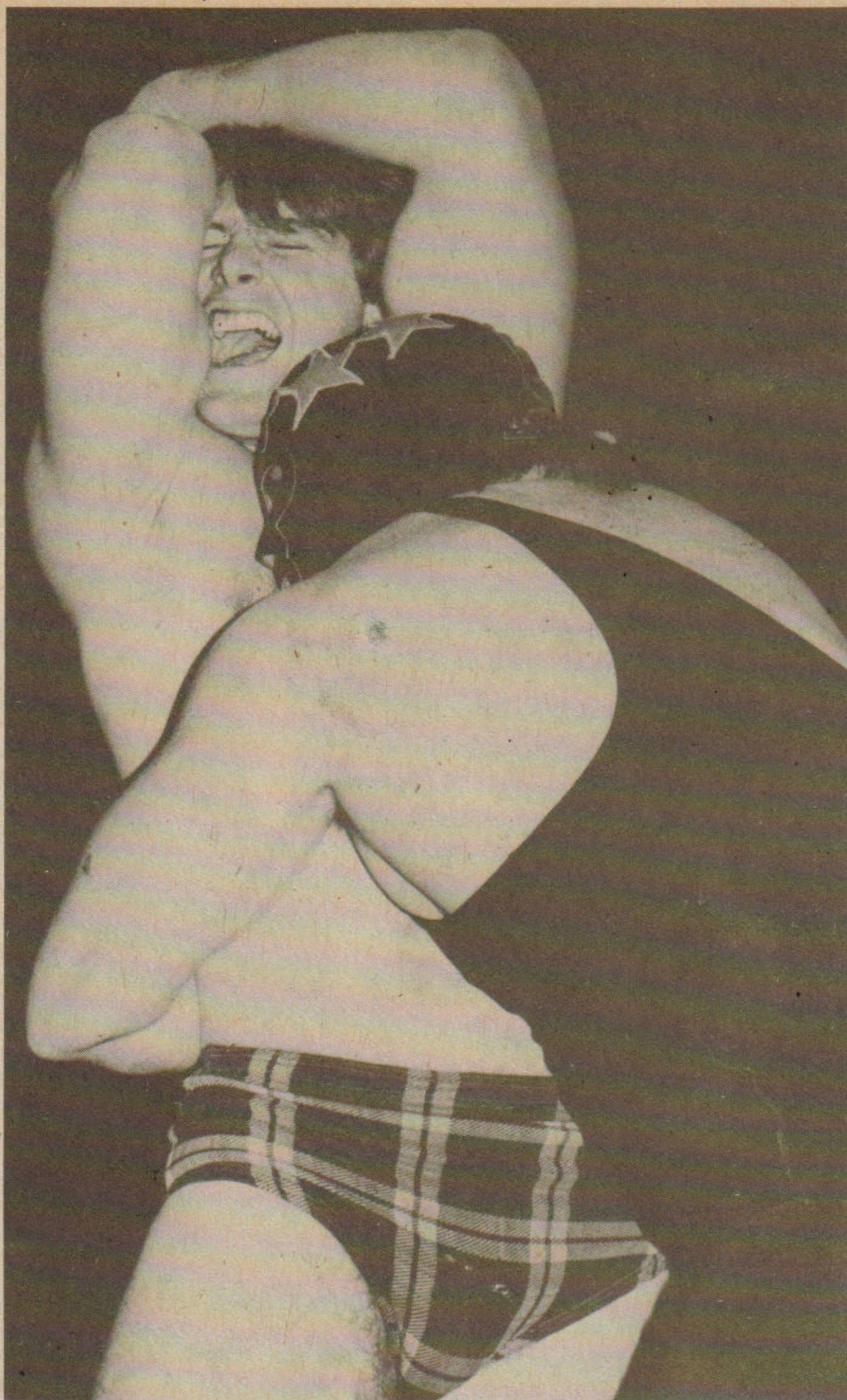
During their recent U.S. title match, a truly thrilling bout, Piper inexplicably permitted himself to be captured in a Masked Superstar bearhug. At that point in the match, Superstar and the entire arena thought it only a matter of time before the masked man would whisk away the belt from Piper.

"I was positive Piper was a goner," said Superstar.

But devouring a man in a bearhug requires an enormous expenditure of energy. More than many moves, for a man must harness all his strength right through his arms. Sometimes the muscles, unaccustomed to such strain, have only a limited amount of time to keep up the hold before weakness sets in.

"Approximately 27 seconds in the case of a man of Masked Superstar's size," said Piper. "It is easy enough to calculate, though I rather doubt I'll offer the formula for public consumption.

"Calculating such things to the precise second is just one of an array of measures I have created to aid me in my career. It isn't that the facts are so difficult to obtain. Anyone who can read, which rules out Superstar, could find the information. But it takes a vast intellect like mine to formulate the computations and properly



Piper could drive his elbows into Masked Superstar's head to break out of the bearhug, but he does not. Roddy has calculated just how long he would have to stay in the bearhug before Superstar would exhaust himself.

Sometimes intelligence can overcome any and all obstacles. Roddy Piper is one smart wrestler. He knows how to analyze and thus narrow, if not obliterate, all potential problems. In fact, Piper may be the most intelligent, albeit twisted, champion in Mid-Atlantic wrestling history



apply them.

"That is what separates one form of life from another. In this case man, myself, from beast, Masked Superstar."

Sure enough, Superstar's crushing bearhug waned after 27 seconds. His huge arm muscles quivered with strain and his neck muscles bulged effortfully. And right then and there Piper turned the momentum of the match around enough to successfully defend his title.

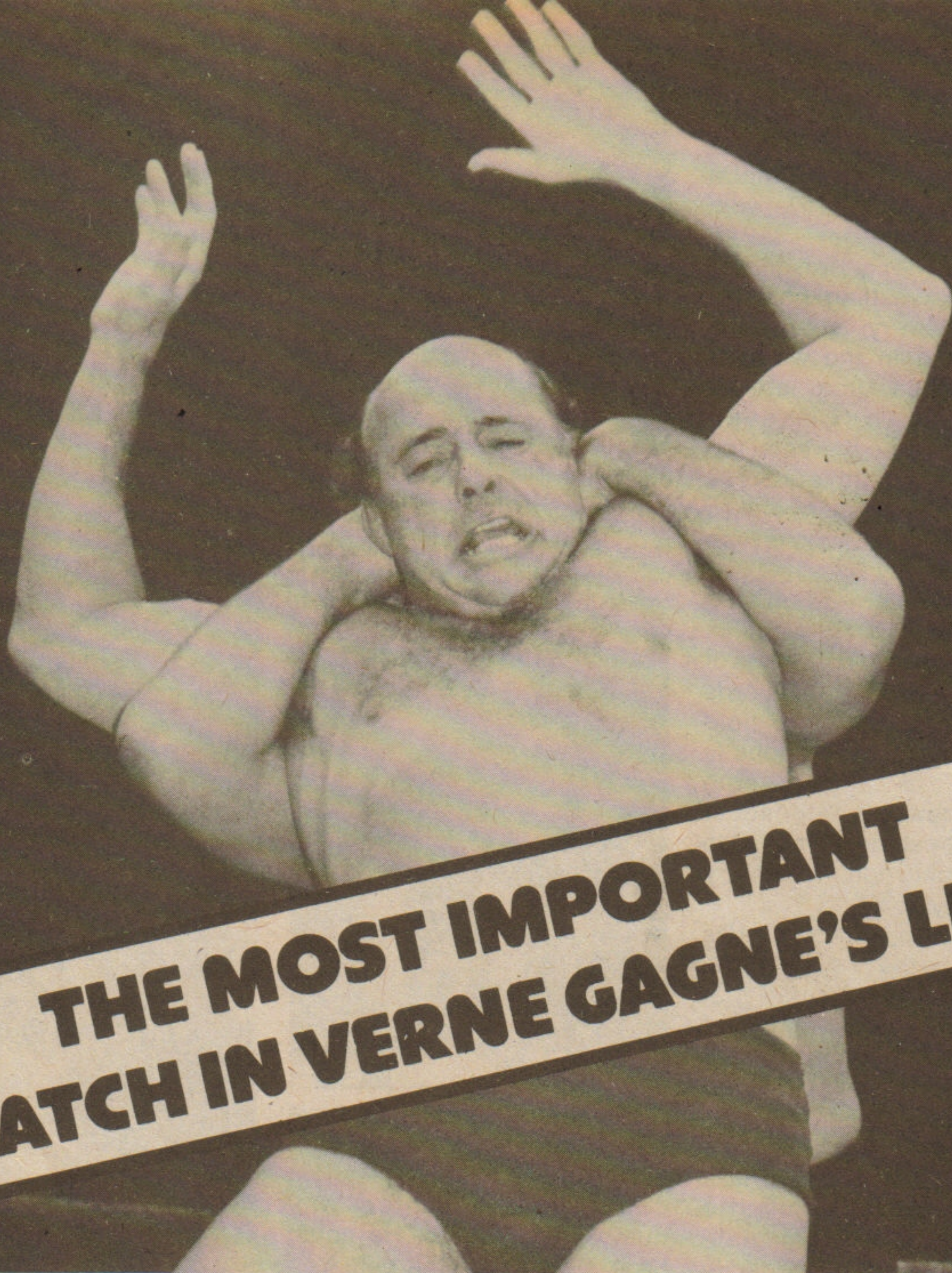


Just a few more seconds and Superstar's arms would be so tired, he would not be able to maintain the bearhug nor defend himself properly thereafter.

"Again, why the surprise?" he asked. "I set the trap, much like the hunter lying in stealthy silence for the dumb animal to wander into his sights. Not for a moment did I doubt Superstar would succumb to his own venal ambitions and permit me another demonstration of genius.

"He is not particularly bright. Oh, sometimes I wonder about wasting my incredible genius on such buffoons as Masked

(Continued on page 63)



THE MOST IMPORTANT MATCH IN VERNE GAGNE'S LIFE

WALKING OUT HIS front door, Verne Gagne realized his hand was trembling. The AWA champion smiled ruefully. It'd been a long time since he'd been this nervous. It'd been a long time since a match had meant this much.

Sitting in his car, Verne took a deep breath before starting the ignition. To calm himself, he tried thinking of bigger matches in which he'd been victorious. After a few moments, his back was soaked with cold sweat. He finally admitted to himself this

was the biggest match of his life.

He started his car, turned the radio on loud, and tried to think of anything but the match. It was impossible. In a career that spanned four decades, he'd never been faced with this kind of challenge. The record books

Verne Gagne wants to go out a winner. With rumors growing sustenance every day over Gagne's possible retirement, the champion wants to erect one more monument in a career cluttered with greatness. Gagne wants to go out on top. That is why he took on the toughest challenge of his entire life

would say this night he wrestled Billy Robinson. Gagne knew he was really in a life-and-death struggle with history.

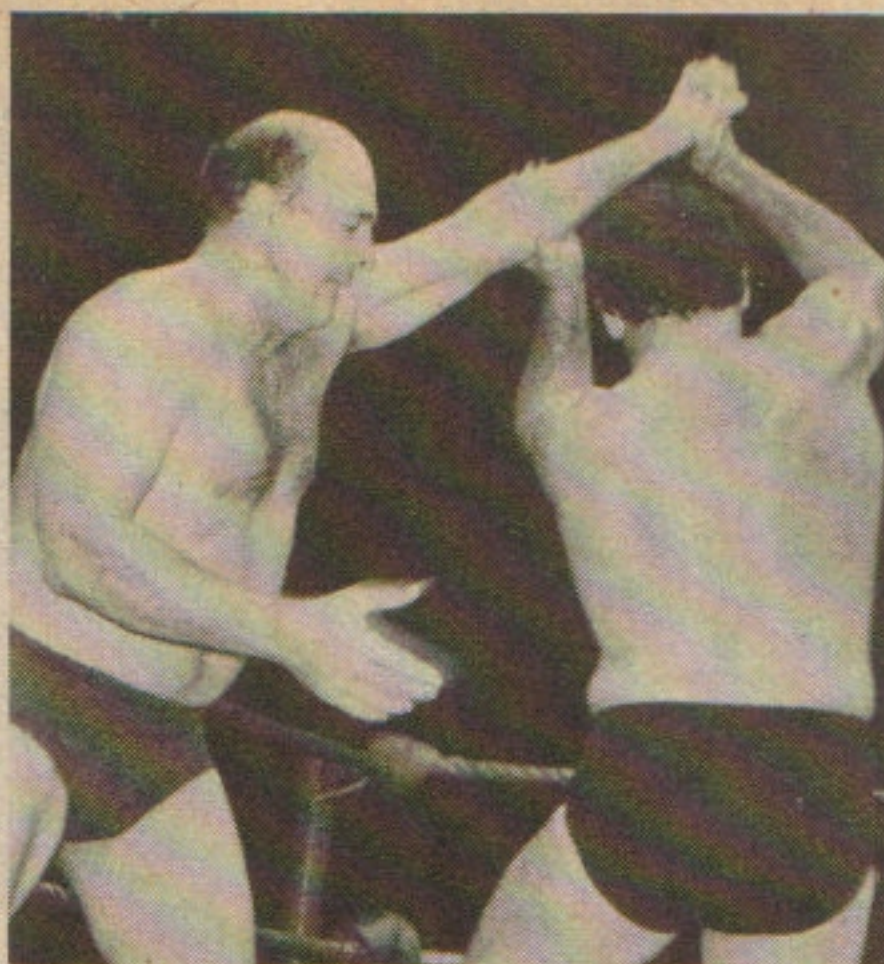
The most important thing in Gagne's life is to retire with honor. No one must ever say he stayed too long, disgraced himself by wrestling past his prime. In every sport, the saddest thing in the world is seeing a once great athlete struggling to be even acceptable. Verne has seen too many of those athletes. His feeling of pity for them makes him sick. He'd rather die than have anyone pity him.

Athletes who stay around too long also ruin their place in history. Along with memories of their greatness, history records their clumsy attempts to hold on. Someone once glorious is remembered as pathetic. Verne knows he now has an honored place in wrestling history. He doesn't want to end that history with tragedy.

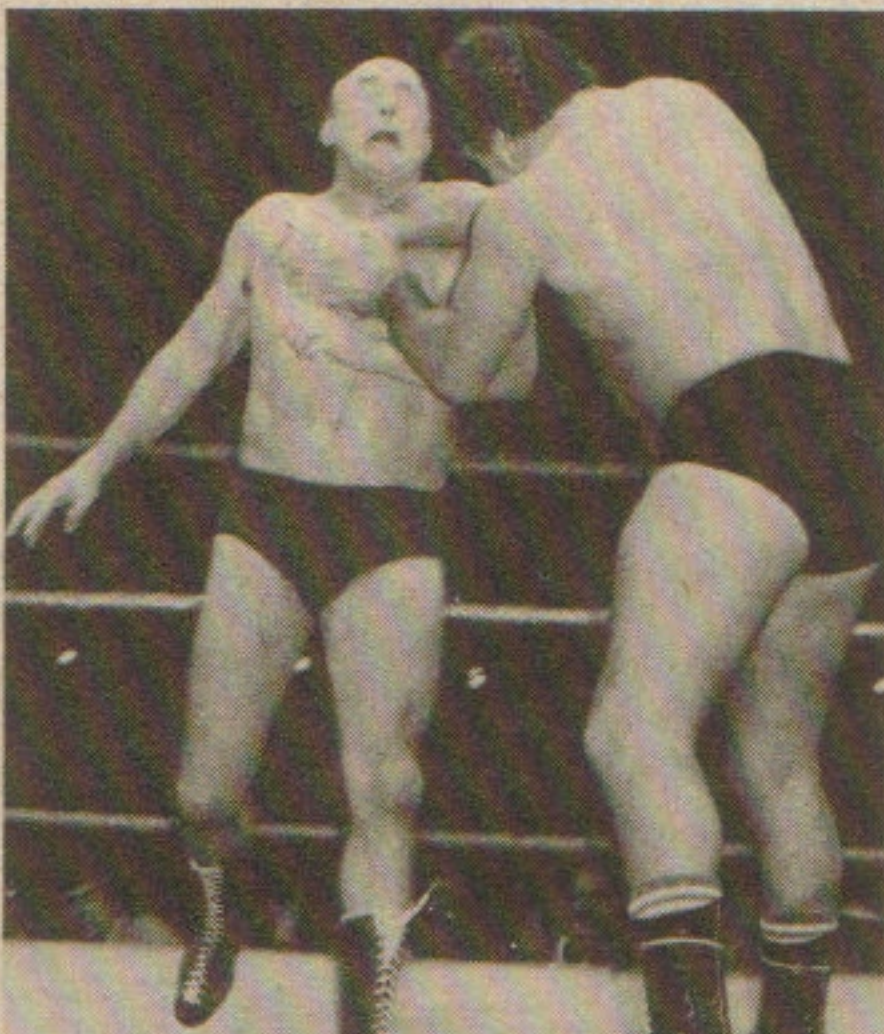
Every match, Verne worries that it may be the one match too many. The match he had that night would be the toughest of his current title reign. Across the ring from him would stand Billy Robinson.

Over the years, Gagne's matches against Robinson have attained almost mythic proportions. The two magnificent athletes are perfectly matched in many ways. Their battles are the ultimate display of wrestling excellence. This night, Verne had to win. History demanded it.

If Verne could win this match honorably, he could eventually retire in a blaze of glory. If Robinson beat him handily, history would say he took one match too many. Even if Robinson had the best match of his career, people would blame Verne's age for his defeat. His excellent career would be permanently disfigured.



Above: Robinson grabs Gagne's arm and starts to twist. Below: Billy connects with a double karate thrust to Gagne's throat. Right: Verne, applying a headlock, did well enough against a top opponent to ensure him that he could continue to defend his AWA title.



Maybe he shouldn't have taken the match, Verne thought as he drove to the arena. He could have invented any number of excuses. He could have retired with the belt. Yet, the need to battle, to conquer, is stronger than it was when Verne first turned professional. He had to take this match. Something inside him demanded it.

So Verne arrived at the arena determined to wrestle his best. He knew Billy Robinson, and what to expect. The victory would go to the man who was best. Verne had to be best.

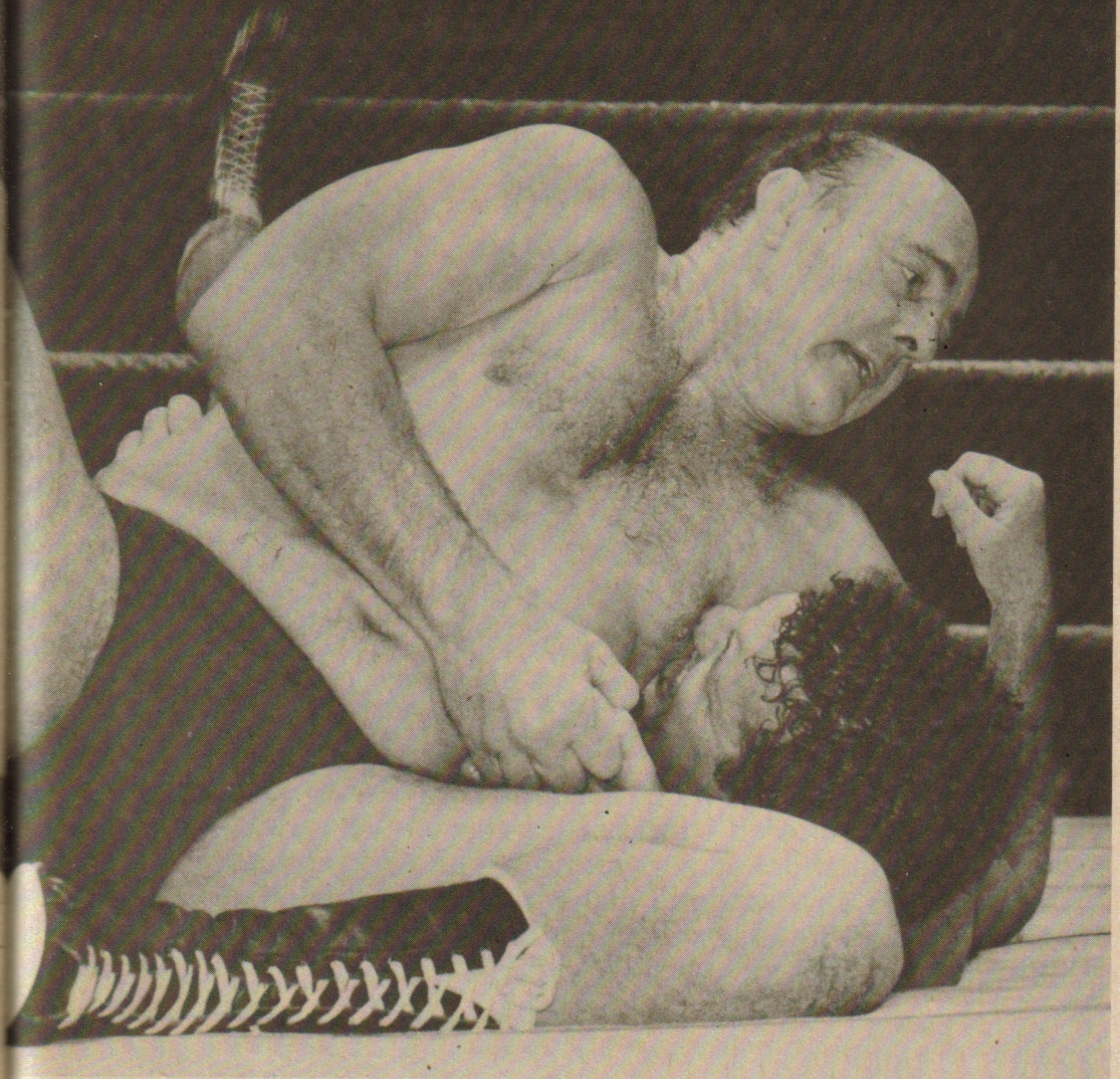
Carefully, he suited up for battle. He checked everything. Then, he did a series of exercises to warm up. When the



call came for him to enter the ring, he was ready.

Staring across the ring at Robinson, Verne smiled. Billy smiled back. Many times in many places, they had stared at each other over the distance. Now, once again, they would have to prove themselves. They smiled for things most of us will never understand.

The bell sounded. Cautiously, the two men approached each



other. They locked in the center of the ring. As their arms interlocked, the battle was on.

From the opening moments, it was superb. Both men were at the top of their form. Every move was calculated and expertly executed. The advantage swayed back and forth; neither man managed to dominate the action for long. Truly, this was a battle between gods.

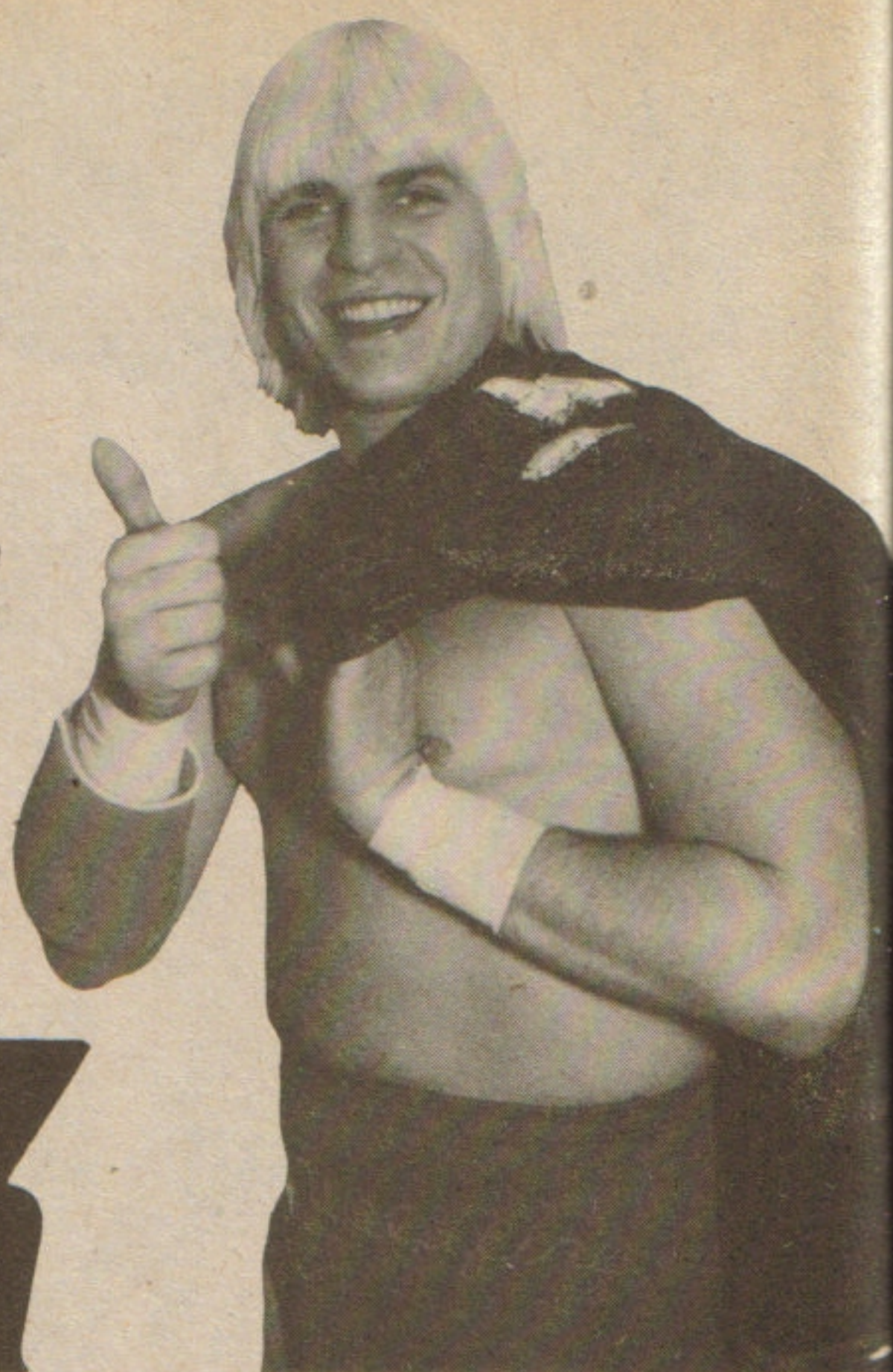
As the match wore on, the two men never seemed to tire. Each movement was planned. Their power and stamina was spread over the entire match. Gagne's offensive strategy probably could have defeated anyone but Robinson. At the same time, only Gagne could have repelled Robinson's brilliant assaults.

As so often happens between two men battling at their best, the match ended in a draw.

Robinson had proved his greatness but failed to take Gagne's belt. Gagne had once again proved he still belongs battling the best.

That night, Gagne went home more relieved than elated. He knew his victory didn't settle anything. It just gave him the chance to wrestle again. At this point in his career, every match is the most important of his life. □

TO HELL AND BACK WITH TOMMY RICH



His travels and ultimate descent into the smoky pits of personal hell altered Tommy Rich forever. His conversion to rulebreaking shocked and saddened all of wrestling. But no one was as shocked and disheartened by this change than Rich himself. In this exclusive interview with Editor-in-Chief Peter King, Rich finally tells why it all happened

BY PETER KING

TOMMY RICH HAS been through an ordeal. He has been to hell and back. Several times, in fact.

"Yeah, sometimes I have trouble looking at myself in the mirror," said Rich. "I still can't believe I did what I did. To this day, I'm not sure what came over me. I really don't know."

Or want to know. Still, Rich struggles to incorporate the reasons for his shocking conversion to rulebreaking. With the memories and scars

still fresh, Rich must now go forward. But not before he talks about where he has been.

"Maybe I don't want to admit that I really know why I did all those things," said Rich. "To know that means I gotta admit something real bad about myself. To do everything I did and betray my friends and my fans shows that maybe there's something wrong with me, deep inside."

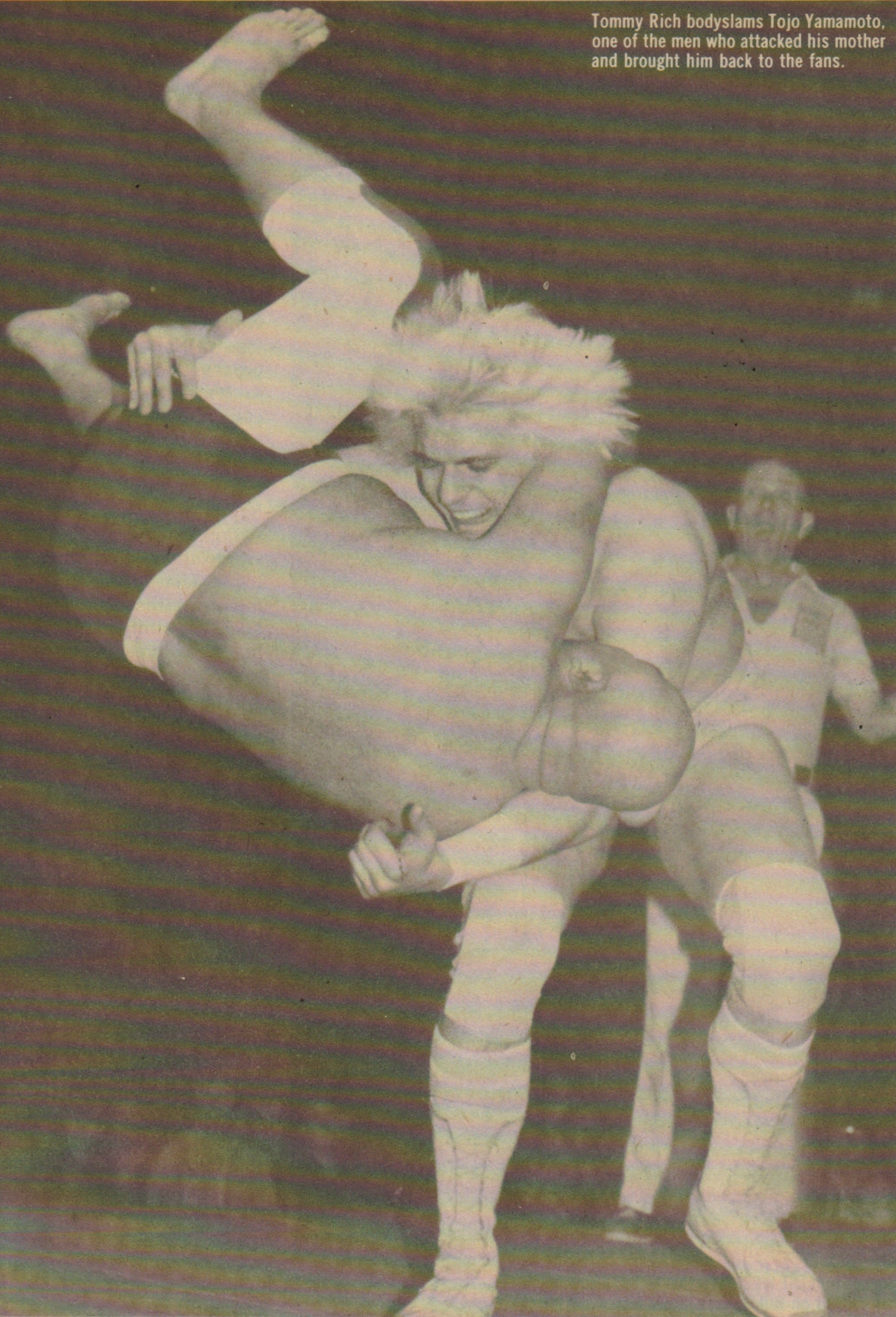
"Why did I do it? Well, remember, I was hot after Harley

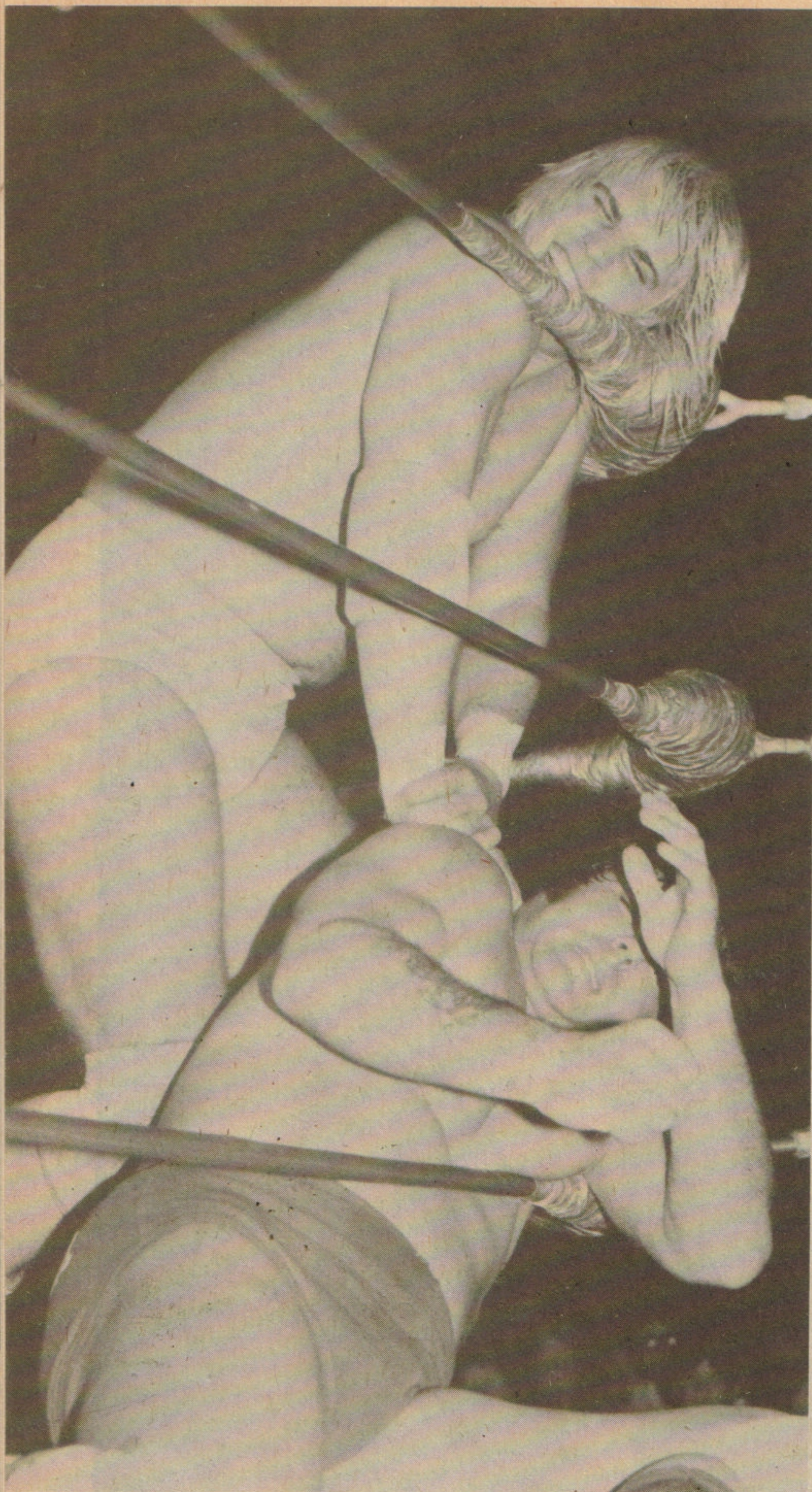
Race's belt. I thought for sure I'd win the title. Hell, I was the 'golden boy' of Georgia wrestling, remember?" Rich said, laughing bitterly. "Why wouldn't someone as 'talented' and 'great' as me win the world title?"

"After all, I read how great I was all the time. The fans kept telling me how great I was. And my fellow wrestlers worked with me and told me I'd make it."

Rich stared down at his feet, his mouth contorting in inner

Tommy Rich bodyslams Tojo Yamamoto, one of the men who attacked his mother and brought him back to the fans.





Tommy told **THE WRESTLER** that he had a sick feeling when he saw this photograph of his assault on Bill Dundee in our March 1981 issue.

turmoil. He sighed in pained weariness and looked back up at his visitor.

"Okay, I guess I got a swelled head. Nothing is worse for a young guy than to start believing his own press clippings. You tend to lose touch with reality and all. You really think you are the greatest thing ever to walk on the planet and you start thinking you're invincible.

"That happened to me. I believed there was no possible way in the world I could possibly lose to Harley Race. I was the great young kid, how could I lose to Race? And then I found I couldn't beat him and I got more and more frustrated.

"Instead of reconsidering my own self, instead of trying to figure out what I was doing wrong, I looked around to see what others were doing wrong to me. That was my first real big mistake. Since I believed I was such hot stuff, someone had to be screwing up my life and preventing me from getting what I deserved, what was my due.

"So I lashed back. I decided, just out of nowhere, I guess, that the other scientific wrestlers didn't like me and were jealous of me. I figured since I was so great that they were, of course, the reason for my problems.

"So I started looking at them differently, not trusting them. Then I started turning on the fans."

Rich's eyes watered.

"That was the dumbest thing I ever did or ever will do if I live to be 150. The fans always backed me up. Even when I was a mean SOB, the fans stayed by my side and I'll never forget them for that. But I got it into my thick skull they were also screwing up my life. I was so twisted up inside that I got some kinda weird pleasure seeing them hurt.

"I just wanted others to hurt like I hurt inside but couldn't tell



If any good could have come from Yamamoto and Jim Valiant's attack on Rich's mother, at least it showed Tommy he was getting involved with the wrong kind of people. Rich dropkicks Valiant as Yamamoto scurries from the ring (above). Tommy looks for—and receives—the support of the fans (below).

anyone 'cause I was suddenly scared. I didn't know how to handle all the pain and the disappointment and I just didn't know what the hell to do.

"So I just gave in to the worst inside me. Everyone has good and bad, but I just up and turned off the good and let the bad run wild. Even when I was being the worst rulebreaker in Tennessee, I didn't feel natural. It didn't seem right, but at that point I didn't know what the hell was right anymore, my whole world was upside down and nothing or



no one made any sense to me.

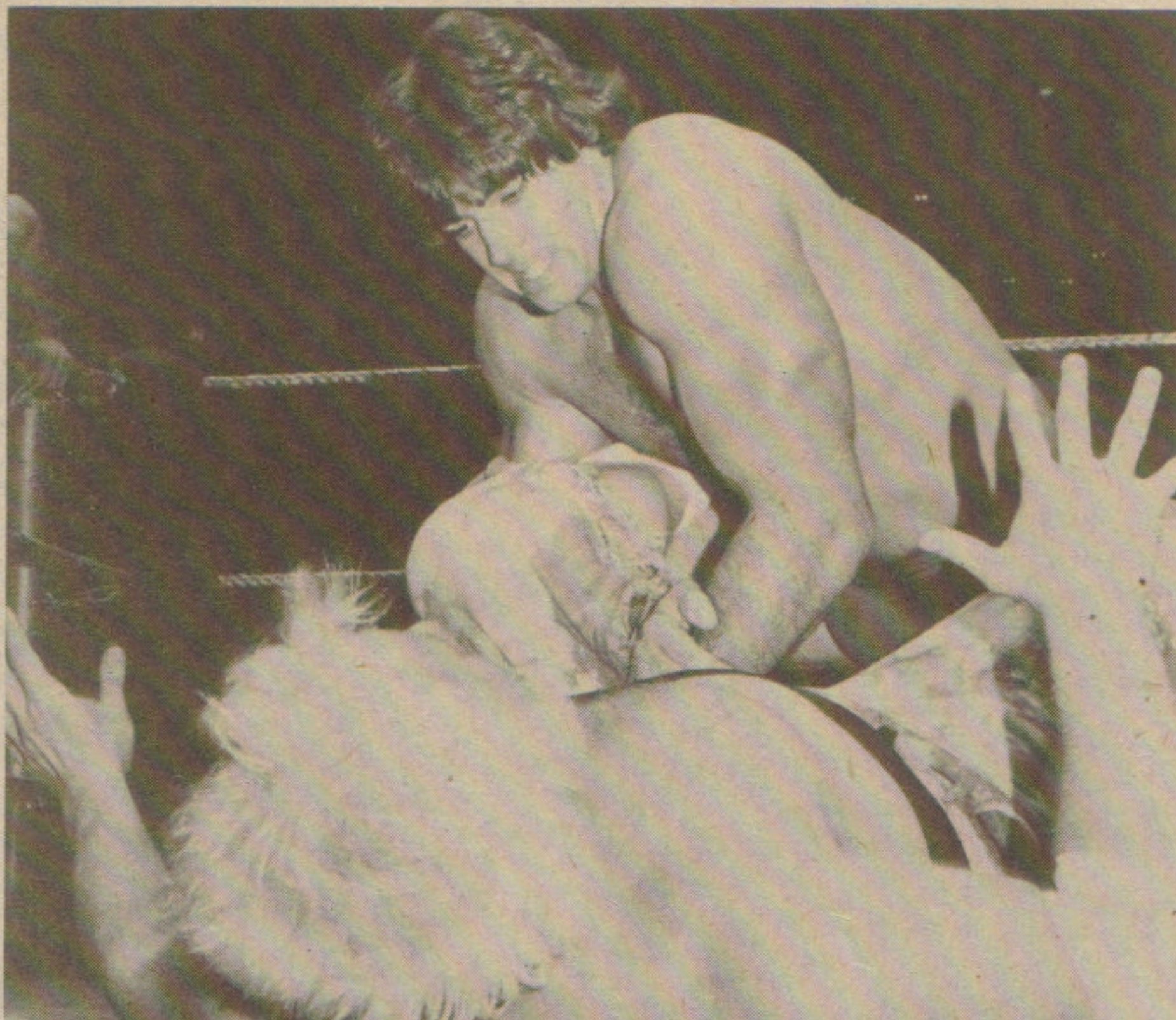
"You want to know what changed me, huh?" Rich smiled crookedly. "Well, I guess when I saw my mom attacked by Jimmy Valiant and Tojo Yamamoto. That's when I realized what kind of vermin I'd thrown myself into. And that's when I realized that, to the rest of the world, I was no better than them."

Rich rose, his shoulders erect, his eyes direct upon his visitor.

"Tommy Rich is back," he said. "All in one piece. Man, am I ever glad." □

GAREA & MARTEL

(Continued from Page 29)



Martel locks up Moondog Rex's leg (above). Garea and Martel are given back their belts after an impressive victory over The Moondogs (below). When will these sensational champions get their just recognition?

"That's the point. At the same time, you can easily recall specific instances in matches Garea and Martel wrestled alone. Each man possesses his own magic, that's what makes him a star, but the magic disappears when they're together. For all I know, they may be champions for years, but they'll never get their just adulation. The magic just isn't there."

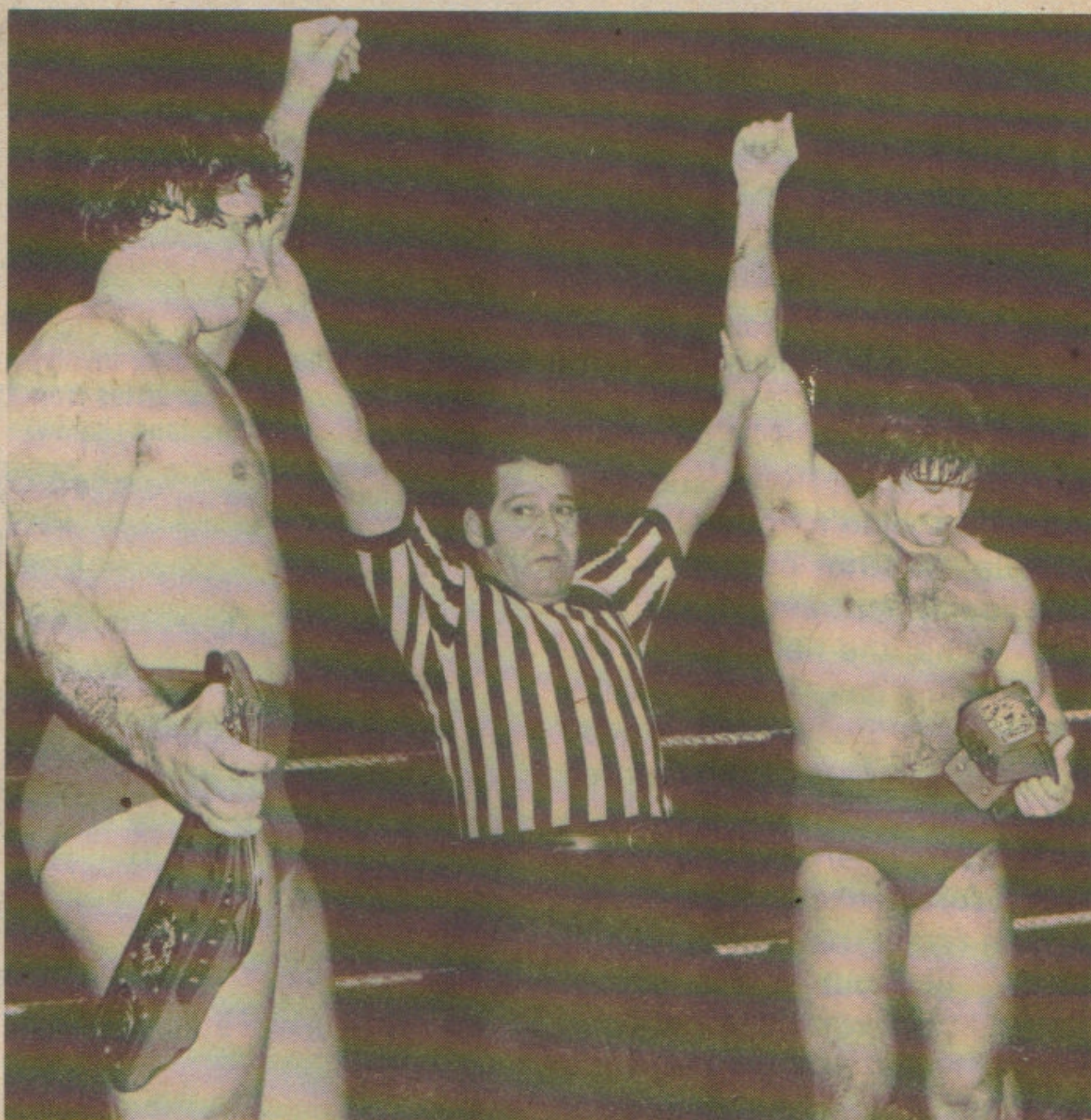
They ordered another round. This drink was to toast the champions, "who because they don't have what can't be explained can never be appreciated for what they are." The bartender told them this was the last round. Both agreed it was the right time of the evening to start heading home.

"Wait a minute!" one of the men shouted, his eyes sparkling. "Who says we know all the kinds of magic? What if

Garea and Martel have a new kind of magic? Maybe their magic takes some getting used to. We have to learn to appreciate their magic. All of a sudden, for no reason whatsoever, we'll be bowled over by these guys. They may be ushering in a whole new era and we're too stupid to see it."

His companion thought that one over. "Do you remember," he asked, "years ago, when I was just starting out, I wrote a story about a musclebound kid. I said he was clumsy and will spend the rest of his life in prelims."

"I remember," his friend laughed. "That kid was Bruno Sammartino. Yeah, maybe we're once again going to learn a new kind of magic." □



MIKE GRAHAM

(Continued from Page 31)

admit that kind of problem. Well, I really had no choice in the matter. Either I faced the problem or went down the tubes."

So, Mike tried to get his life back into order.

"I never had a match as tough as the one I battled against myself," Mike recalls. "All of a



sudden, I had to ask myself, 'What do I really want?' Before that, my father told me what I should want. No, that's not fair. He told me the best way to get what I thought I wanted. I just never thought my future through. Now, without my father beside me constantly, I had to think for myself."

Thus began the most important years in Mike's life. "First, I had to stop thinking I could do anything I wanted, when I wanted," he said. "Getting into feuds was stupid. Wrestling guys for the hell of it was stupid. I started picking my opponents carefully, wrestling guys who could put me nearer a title shot.

"I started to take myself seriously. This is my career, I've got to control it, and nobody is going to help me. Taking yourself seriously is a lot harder than it sounds.

"I haven't always succeeded. I



Graham sends Von Raschke reeling with a perfectly placed dropkick to the chest (left). The Baron is wide open and Graham takes advantage with a right cross to the head (above). Graham is led from the ring by Barry Windham and referee Scrappy McGowan after gaining a disqualification victory (below).

still let my temper get the best of me. Other times, I take matches just because I think they'd be fun. Then, if a buddy needs a tag team partner quickly, even if I'm not ready to wrestle, I'll take the match. I've been injured more than once that way. Even if I'm lucky to get out of the match healthy, that's still time I've taken away from my career.

"Harley Race's NWA belt is the only thing that interests me now. All the rest has to be ignored. I've got a goal and I'm sticking to it. I'm a professional. In high school, wrestling was a sport. Today, wrestling is my business. It took me too long to know the difference."

Mike's father, Eddie, is relieved. "When Mike was running hogwild, I wouldn't talk to the press about him," he said. "Now that he seems to be straightening out, I'll talk about it.

"Some of it is my fault. I tried to protect him from the mistakes every young guy has to make. I figured I could make things easier for him. Instead, I just delayed the inevitable. Because



Mike was more famous than most kids his age, his mistakes were tougher to correct. But he's heading in the right direction now. And he's heading on his own.

"Mike had to learn, sooner or later, every man is on his own."

Mike Graham knows this now. Yet knowing it doesn't make it any easier. There are nights he wishes desperately that his father was driving by his side, discussing Mike's match. Now Mike drives alone. It's the only way he can get where he wants to go. □

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CORRESPONDENT REPORTS

(Continued from Page 8)

Though Slaughter maintained his foot was on the ropes, the referee awarded the win to Backlund.

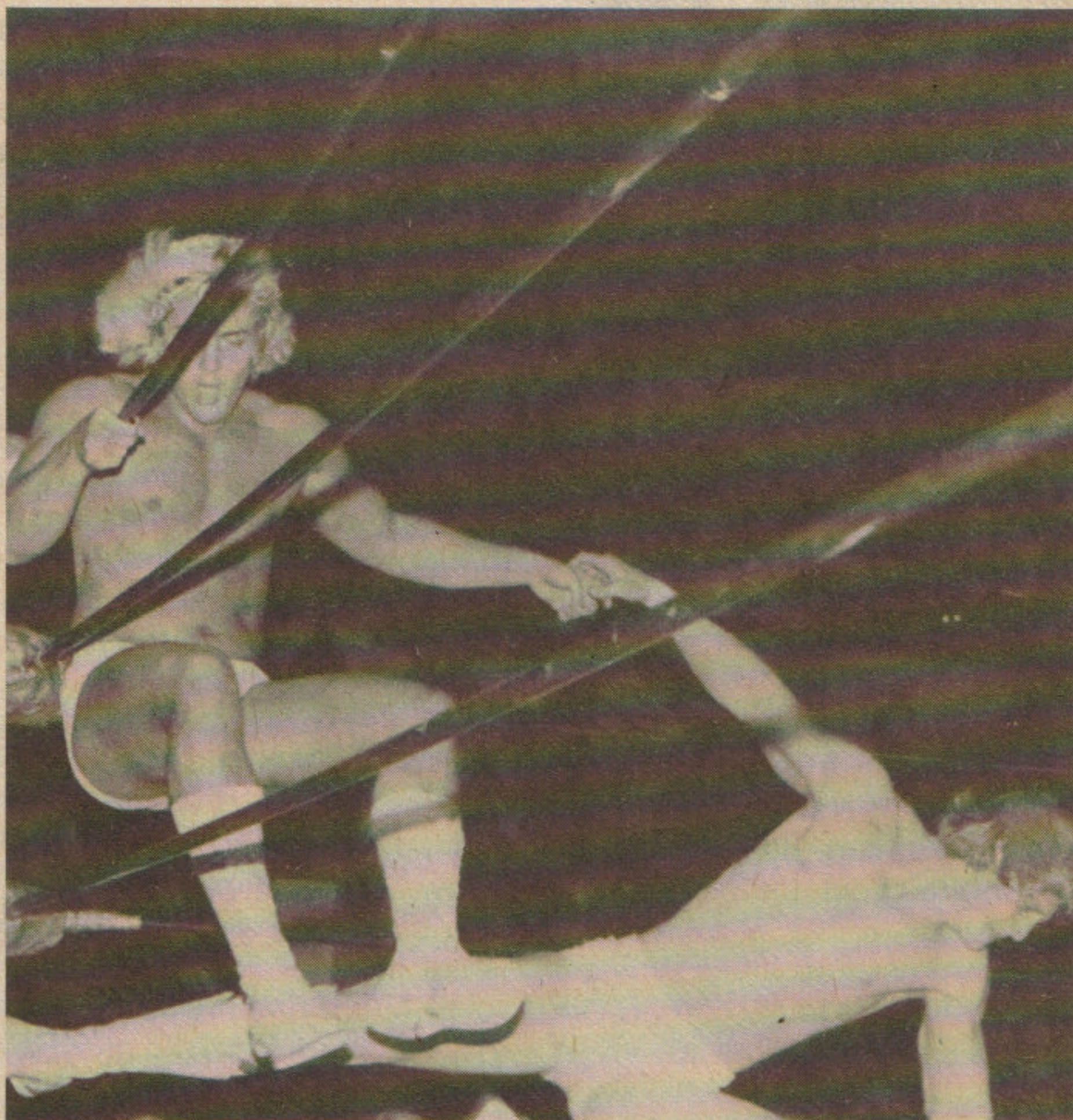
In other matches, The Moondogs, Rex and King, gnawed past Dominic DeNucci and Frank Savage . . . Tony Garea beat Baron Scicluna . . . Rick Martel and The Hangman battled to a draw . . . Killer Khan whipped the unpredictable Johnny Rodz.

and into the lobby! Finally the referee had to disqualify both of them, though the crowd enjoyed this amazing bout.

In other matches, David Von Erich upended Gary Hart . . . Fritz Von Erich defeated Tim Brooks by using the clawhold . . . Kevin, David, and Kerry Von Erich beat Gary Hart, Gary Young, and Gino Hernandez.

TYLER, TEXAS—Correspondent: Chris Wright—Tonight was an evening of pure pandemonium as Kevin Von Erich took on Gino Hernandez. From the opening bell, this match was a brawl. Hernandez controlled the first part of the match. Then things really went crazy as both wrestlers battled outside the ring, down the aisles,

CHATTANOOGA, TN—Correspondent: Curtis Gresham—Andre the Giant battled The Mongolian Stomper in a special challenge match. Andre had to contend not only with Stomper but his cunning manager, Don Carson. Andre dominated the match, but The Stomper managed to snare Andre in a cobra hold. With the



Gino Hernandez deftly moves aside to avoid an onrushing Kevin Von Erich. This wild melee eventually poured out of the ring, into the aisles, and eventually was broken up in the lobby! Both men were disqualified.

crowd shrieking, Andre escaped the hold and caught Stomper in a bearhug. Sensing defeat, Carson interfered, but Andre smashed both manager and wrestler, winning by disqualification.

In other matches, Mr. Wrestling II won by disqualification over Harley Race . . . Steve Keirn decisioned Ole Anderson . . . Steve O bested Bobby Eaton . . . Jim Duccan drew with Charlie Cook.



Jay Youngblood and his father, Chief Jay Youngblood, won by disqualification over Playboy Buddy Rose and Rip Oliver.

PORTLAND OR—Correspondent: Lisa Sumrill—It was an exciting main event at the Sports Arena when Playboy Buddy Rose and Rip Oliver teamed against Chief Jay Youngblood and Jay Youngblood Jr. The Youngbloods won the first fall when Jay Jr. caught Rose in a sleeper. Oliver and Rose came back to capture the second fall. In the third fall, Destroyer aided Rose and Oliver as the three of them tied up Jay Jr. and then delivered three piledrivers on Chief Jay. Joe Lightfoot raced into the ring to aid his blood brothers and the three rule-breakers ran away, disqualified.

In other matches, The Destroyer used a piledriver to beat Ricky Hunter . . . Buzz Sawyer got past Terry Allen . . . Jonathan Boyd defeated Tonga John . . . Joe Lightfoot stomped all over unpopular Igor Volkoff. □

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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from Page 10)

Q: "What advice does Captain Lou Albano have for someone interested in becoming a wrestling manager?"—Andrew Pilaskis, Baltimore, MD

A: The Captain took one breath and gave his answer. "I can tell you there's only one way, the Captain's way, it's the



Lou Albano discusses what it takes to be a "great" wrestling manager. The Captain feels that he is the only man qualified to give such an answer.

right way, the best way, the successful way, the path to glory and greatness," said Albano. "You have to be tough like the Captain, you need nerves of steel, guts of iron, the toughness of a rhinoceros. You need brains, brains like I have, the mind of a genius, the sort of intelligence that can win the Nobel Prize, find a cure for every disease known to man, build a spaceship, cook a dinner for 30, that's the kind of brains, and you need shrewdness, you gotta know what to do and when to do it or else you're a goner, they'll chew you up and spit you out. That's my advice, I don't think you'll do it, there's only one Captain, always will be, just

one and that's me, maybe you'll become second best someday."

Q: "I'd like to ask Dusty Rhodes if he thinks Harley Race should be allowed to defend his NWA title in the WWF and other areas?"—Olivia Johnson, Tampa, FL

A: "Well, you know Race is gonna try and run and he's gonna try and hide, don't matter where he runs or where he hides, he don't want to put his belt up against any of the good ones down here in the NWA," said Rhodes. "Now as you all know, I don't care none for wrestlin' for the NWA title long as Race holds the belt. But I do think the

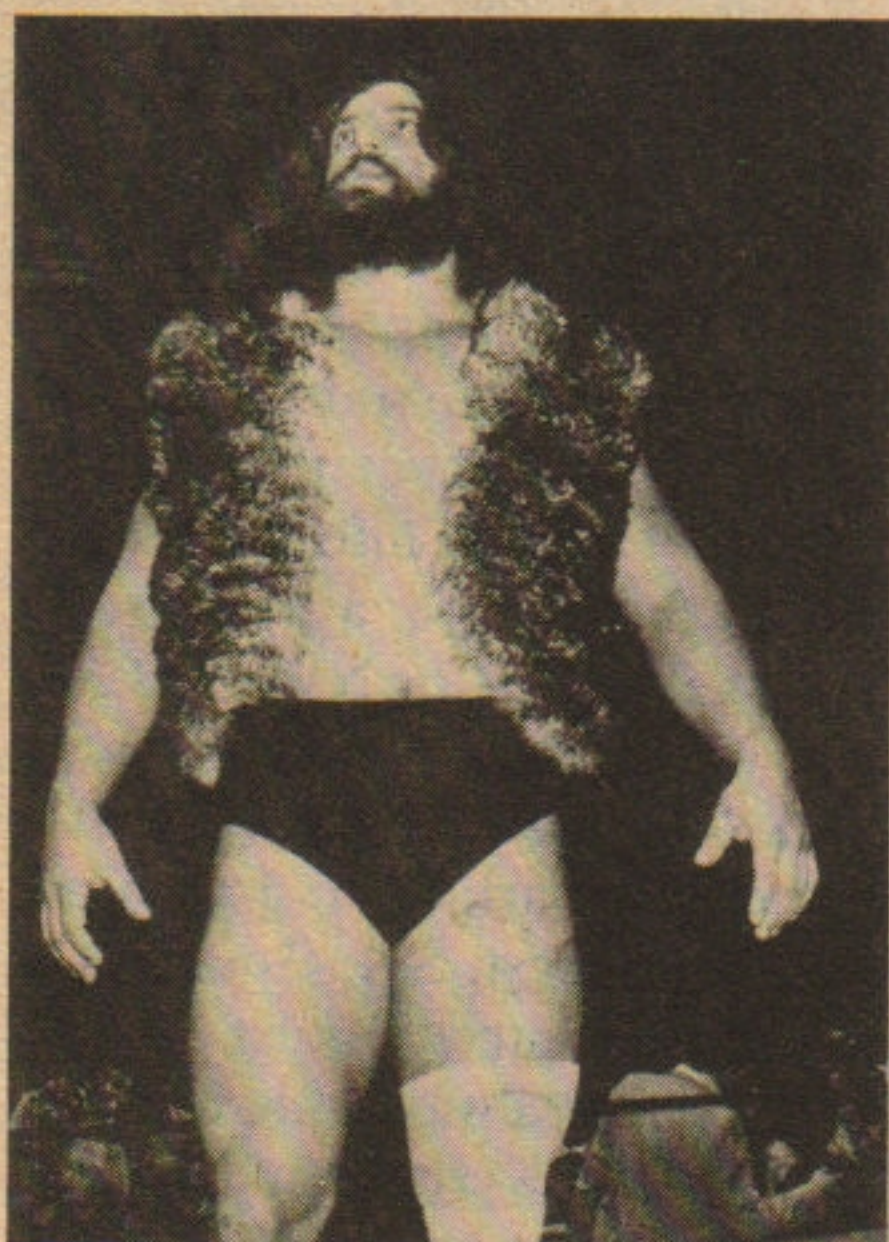


Harley Race created quite a stir in NWA circles when he elected to defend his title against Superstar Graham in the WWF area a few years ago.

slob owes the people in the NWA their rightful chance. And, hopefully, one day the fans and wrestlers alike can be proud of their champion again.

Q: "Is it true that Bruiser Brodie spent several years in a mental institution for the hopelessly insane?"—Freddy Donovan, Fort Worth, TX

A: Our investigators contacted persons close to Brodie. All insisted Brodie has not spent any appreciable amount of



Although Bruiser Brodie has not spent any "appreciable" time in a mental institution, that doesn't mean he hasn't spent any time. And it doesn't mean he couldn't benefit from some more time.

time in any mental hospital. However, various psychiatrists contacted in Texas insist Brodie probably should seek some form of mental aid.

Q: "Does Masked Superstar ever think he'll return to the ways of rulebreaking?"—George Bushwick, Charleston, SC

A: "George, to be perfectly honest, I can't ever contemplate the sort of situation which would make me turn on all the great friends I've found in this world, good buddies like Paul Jones and Rick Steamboat and the rest. No, I would sooner swallow poison than ever betray the love and respect and trust of my friends and my fine fans," said Masked Superstar. ☐

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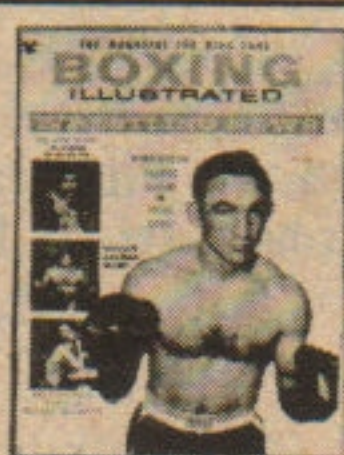
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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from Page 12)



Greg Valentine (above) and Roddy Piper have become very close friends. Greg has gone as far as to make sure Piper gets disqualified so he could retain his U.S. title.

feelings were brought about by some missed tag team signals, which both realize happen on occasion. They shook hands and are friends again.

Greg Valentine seems to have become U.S. Champion Roddy Piper's shadow. He and Piper go everywhere together. What's even more noticeable is that Valentine now runs into the ring whenever Piper is in trouble to ensure that his buddy gets to keep his title via disqualification. That's what you call a *real* good friend.

AWA champion Verne Gagne may have more trouble than he bargained for in the person of number-one challenger Nick Bockwinkel. It appears that Bockwinkel has learned how to use the sleeper hold, which happens to be Verne's pet finisher. Gagne admits he has never really been in the position of the man caught in the sleeper and is indeed leary of his next bout with Bockwinkel. Nick's manager, Bobby Heenan gloats, saying, "I will have the AWA title in my grasp very soon again. It's time to turn Gagne out to pasture."

The Madison Square Garden bout between WWF champion Bob Backlund and Stan Hansen had to be one of the wildest brawls ever seen in the huge sports palace. Hansen did not win the title as the match was stopped due to excessive bleeding on the part of both he and Backlund. The fierce battle raged into the dressing rooms and special police had to be called in to separate them. A rematch was immediately signed.

Rumor turning into fact: Dusty Rhodes *will* once again wrestle Harley Race for the NWA title. At press time details are not known. Look for a feature story soon . . . Bruno Sammartino Jr. passed one more tough test, Sgt. Goulet. The match prompted Goulet to say, "He'll be as good as his old man one day." . . . Kerry Von Erich and Bruiser Brodie are both trying to stop Gary Hart's newest destroyer, Kabuki. The strange grappler from the Orient appears to be unstoppable.

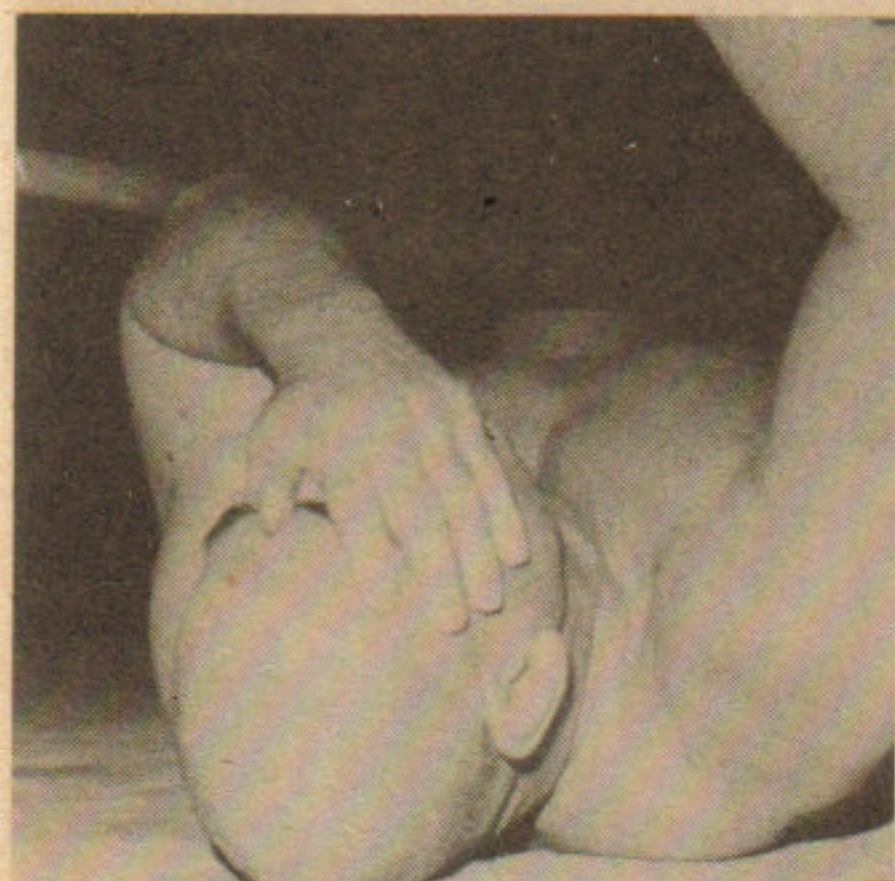
Mid-Atlantic champion Rick Steamboat is rumored to be contemplating giving Ric Flair a shot at his title . . . Killer Karl Kox is sidelined with a leg injury in Louisiana . . . Ivan Putski has left the WWF after a brief visit and returned to the Texas mat wars . . . Chief Jay Strongbow is wrestling in Puerto Rico.

It appears that Hulk Hogan is cutting down on his activities in the WWF. When asked why, Hogan said he did not want to talk about it. But a close friend says it is because Hulk did not get a Madison Square Garden title match against Bob Backlund. "They just passed him by," he notes. "He can't believe it. Neither can I." By the way, Hogan says his legal team will try to get him that match.

And that's what's happening. See you next time! □

MONGOLIAN STOMPER

(Continued from Page 33)



Stomper writhes on the mat after receiving his worst beating in years. Manager Carson claims he told his man to take the beating so they could learn Mr. Wrestling II's best moves.

His visitor asked why, if Stomper were so unbeatable, they needed to get II's maneuvers down on film. Why couldn't Stomper just waltz right in and whip II?

"Because II cheats," Carson replied. "Now we have his cheating down on film. He can't whine and cry his way out, it's all there in black-and-white, we'll use it for the next match and the next match again until we are ready to unveil our secret plan."

Which is?

"Can't tell, you'll see, won't divulge any information at all, you'll find out with the rest of the world."

When II learned of Carson's plan, he threw his masked head back and burst out in laughter.

"So they think they got all my moves down, did they?" II grinned behind the white mask. "Well, I think they may have a little surprise coming to them. Just so happens I suspected that silly little plan all along and held back one of my choice maneuvers."

"Oh, which one, you want to know, huh?" II's mask pulled together in an impish smile. "Maybe you'll just find out along with Stomper and Carson next time I whip them." □

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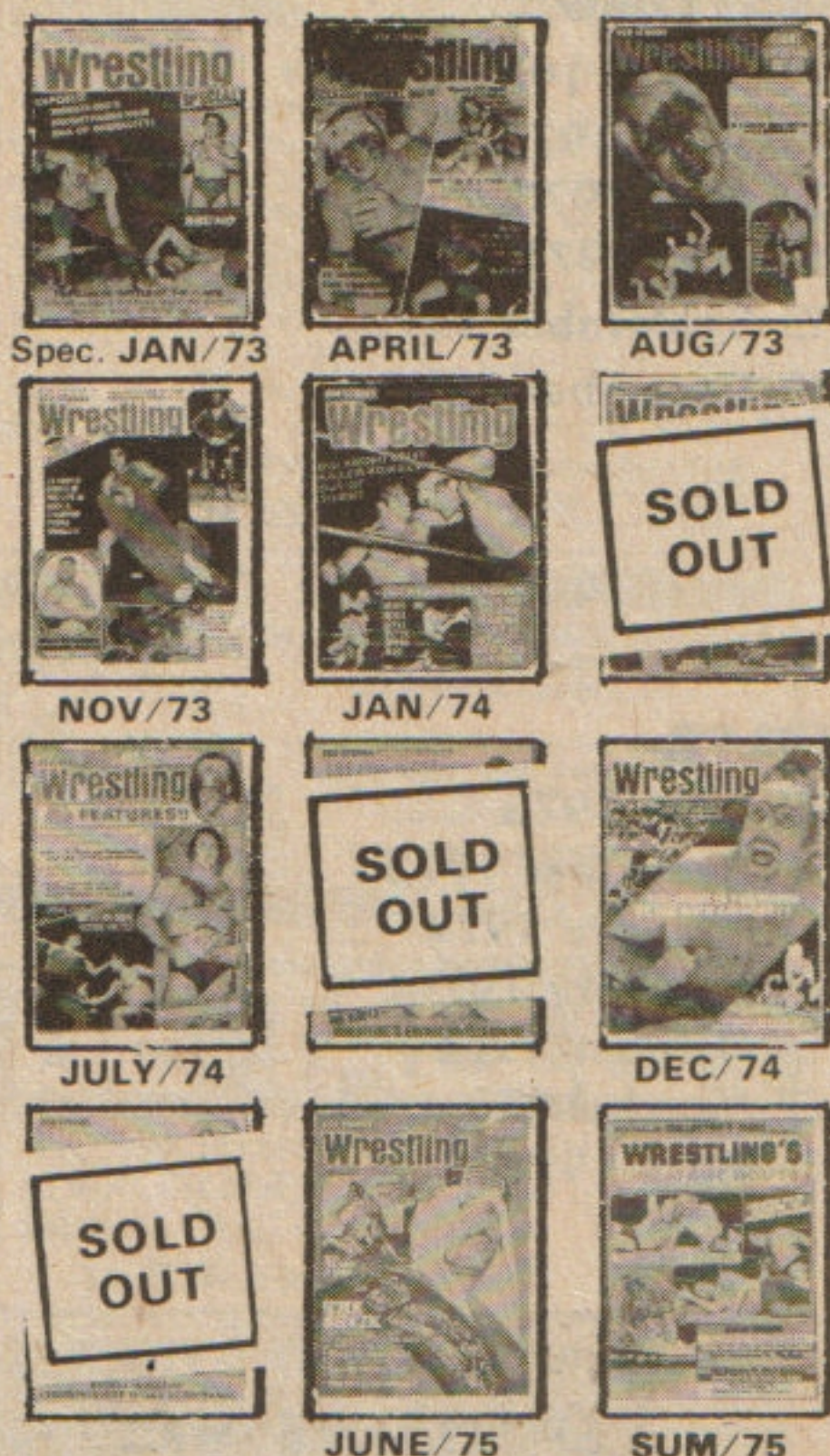
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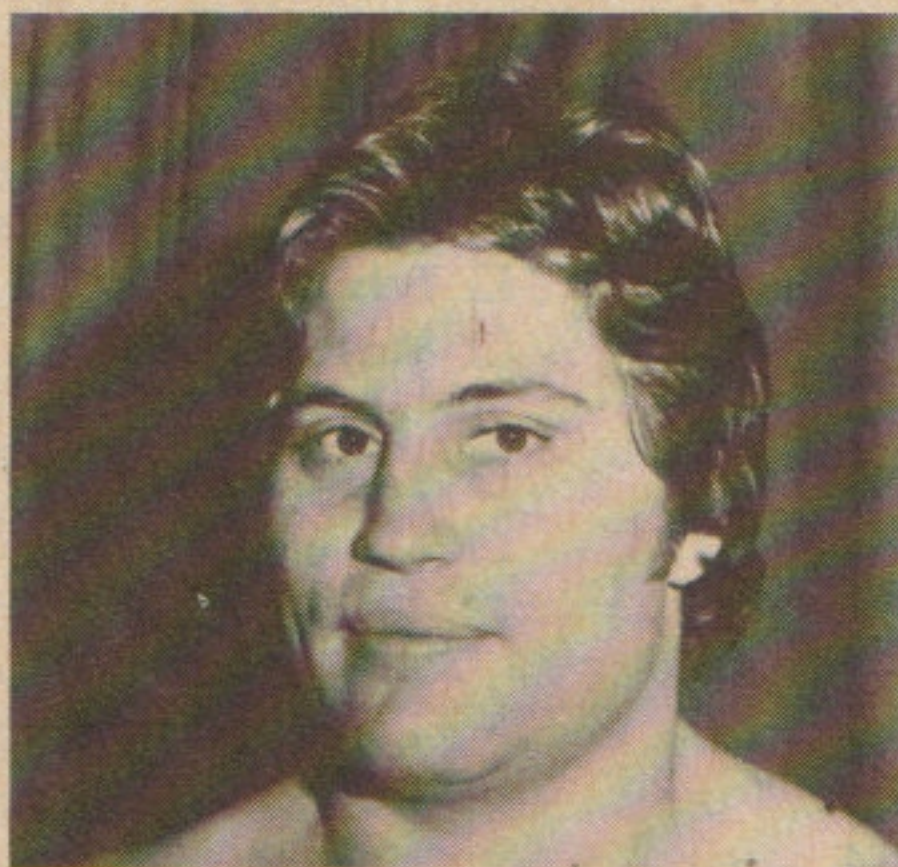
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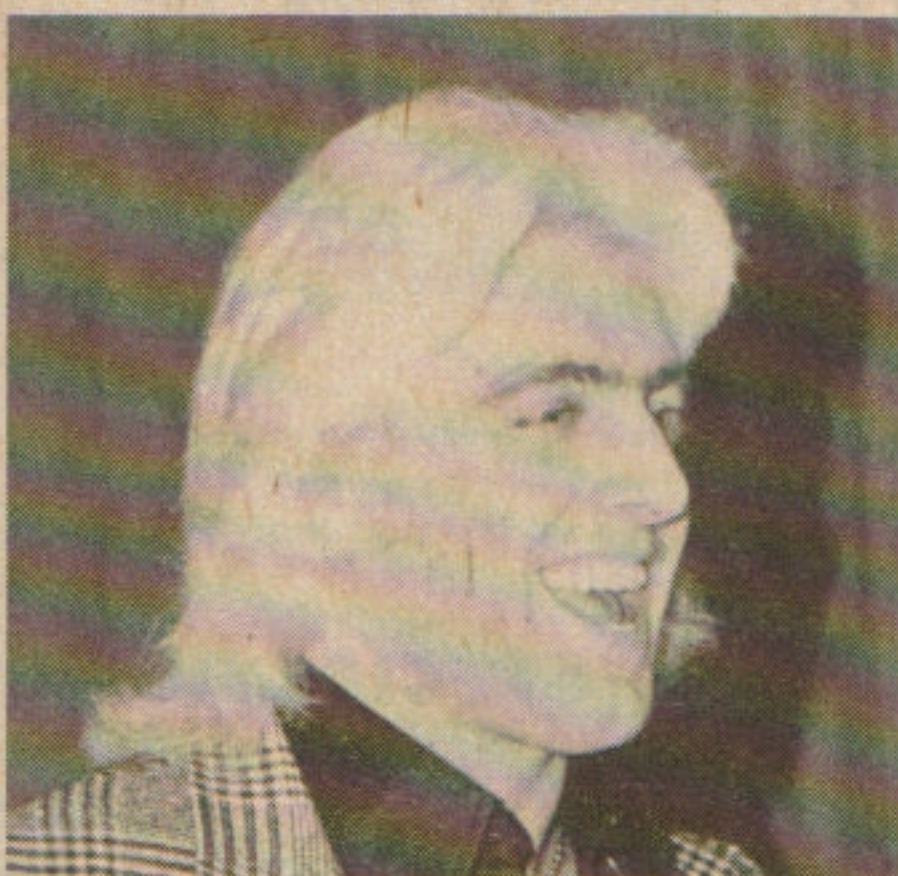
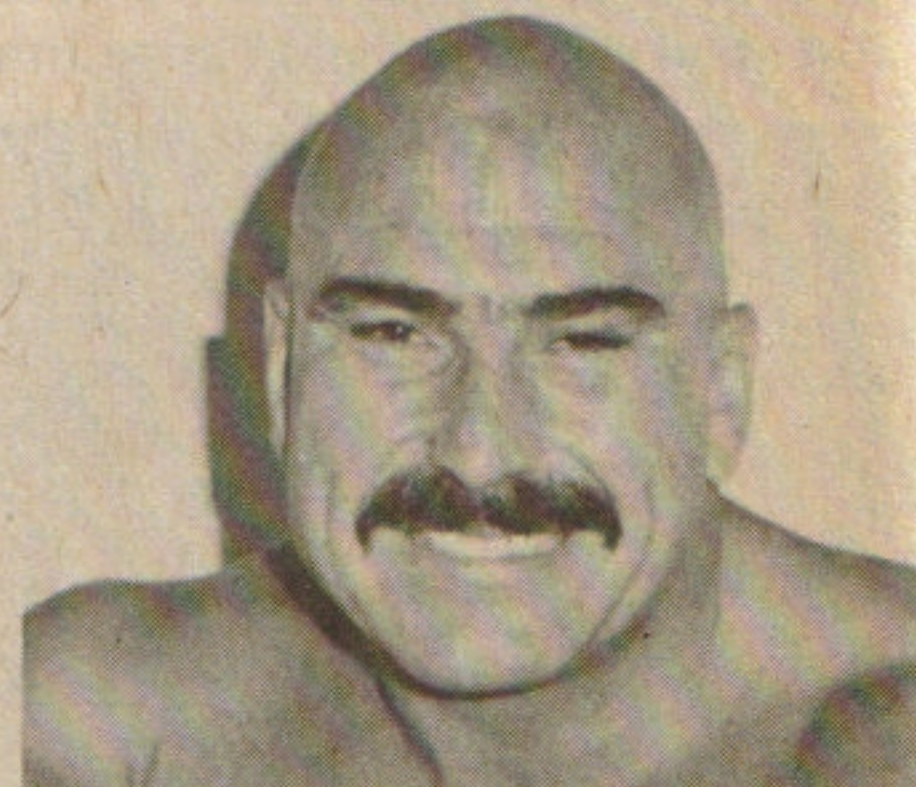
THUMBS UP, THUMBS DOWN

(Continued from Page 18)



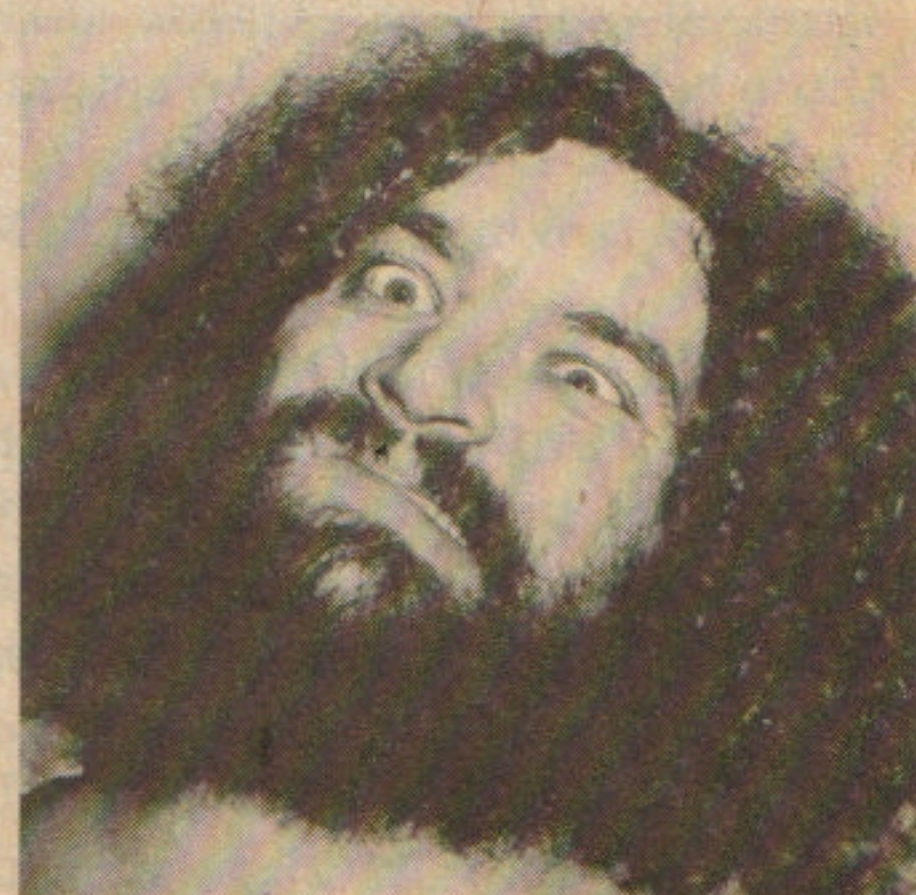
THUMBS UP to Jim Brunzell: Always count on this handsome young man to stand by his friends. When Greg Gagne informed him that terror was sweeping through the AWA, Brunzell rushed back to the scene of earlier triumphs to aid Gagne in beating back the horror of Jesse Ventura and Adrian Adonis.

THUMBS DOWN to The Mongolian Stomper: Throughout his long and sinister career, The Mongolian Stomper has embodied the lowest, worst traits of man. His unbelievable cruelty still shocks the most hardened of wrestling watchers. Now he has declared war on an institution in Georgia, Mr. Wrestling II.



THUMBS UP to Ric Flair: Now that his United States title reign has come to an end, we can all look back with appreciation at a championship won with honor and defended with valor. There have been few champions in any sport who have held their titles with the dignity and grace with which Ric Flair held his.

THUMBS DOWN to Killer Brooks: Senseless and depraved are the only fitting words anyone could use to describe Killer Brooks' behavior in Texas. What drives this tormented soul to make his slanderous accusations against the Von Erichs? What propells this sick man to seek total mutilation and dismemberment of foes? Can he be helped? ☐



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GEORGE WELLS

(Continued from Page 27)

didn't end with his football career.

In 1979, Wells won the Pacific Coast tag team title with Dean Ho. With Tony Morrow, Wells defeated the Castillo brothers to capture the Midwest tag team title, and in 1980 won the Western United States title from Bruiser Sweetan in a brawl in San Francisco.

Right now, Wells is Mid-Atlantic tag team champ with best friend, Dewey Robertson.



Dewey Robertson, who shares the Mid-Atlantic tag team title with Wells, appreciates the aggressive approach of his partner, a former professional football player.

"George just amazes me," said Robertson. "He is so incredibly versatile. I don't think I've ever seen a wrestler who is so darn good at so many different maneuvers."

"George can do aerial maneuvers, he is very quick, has good speed moves, and he's real strong. But the big thing about Wells is his aggressiveness. He just never quits until he has his man."

Wells is proud of his versatility.

"Some guys are versatile, but it's just another name for not being able to do one thing good. I think if you're gonna get into the ring, you best be prepared for all kinds of things."

"Just like football. The offense will line up in different formations,

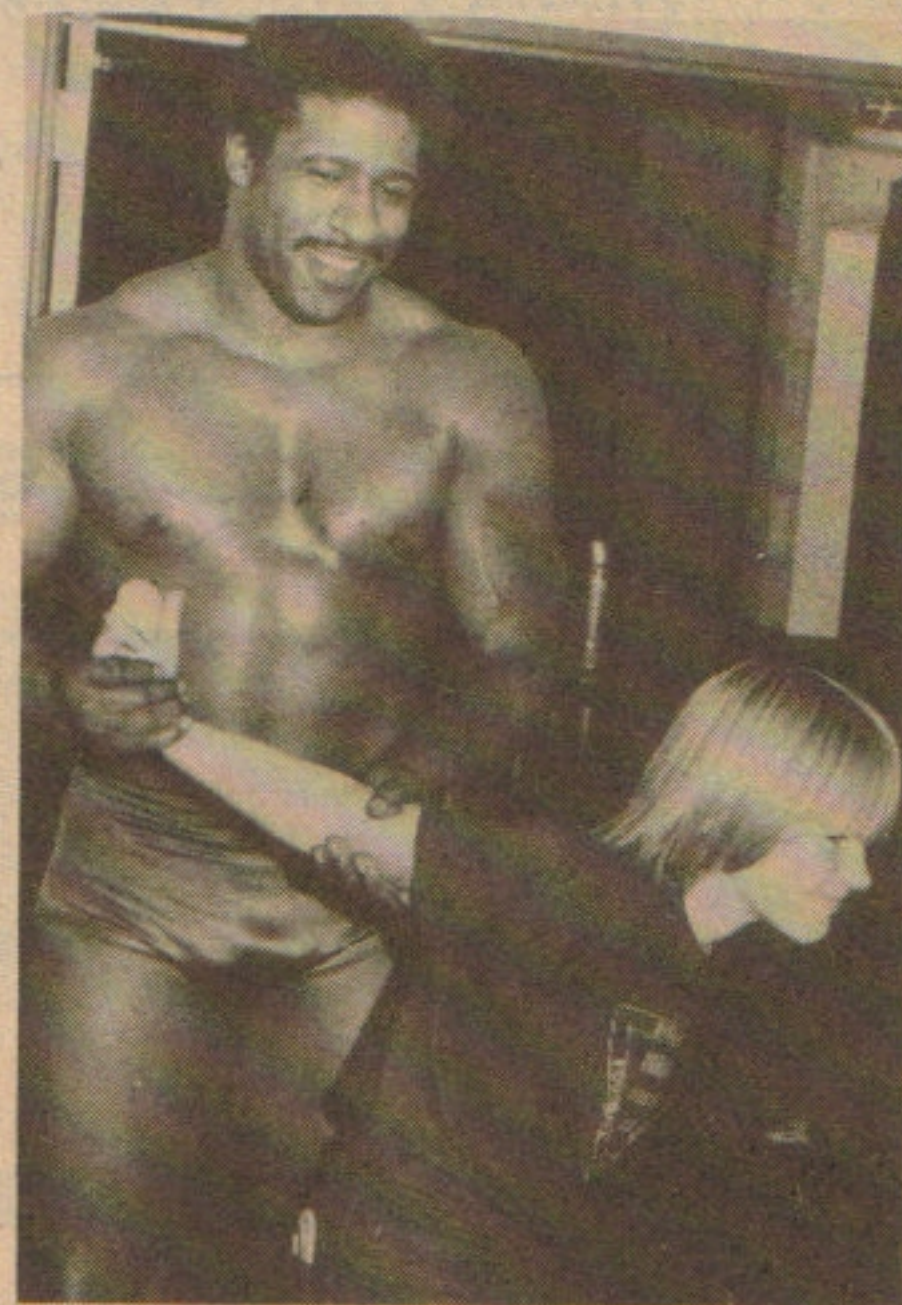
your opponent will try different tactics, and you just can't keep trying the same ol' thing."

"A real champion does a lot of different things real well. My goal is to perfect each and every aspect of my game until I can do just about anything I want in the wrestling ring."

Right now, Wells considers Mr. Fuji and Tenru his biggest challengers.

"Man, they're just out-and-out mean," said Wells. "But the meaner they are, the better I like it. I want a real challenge. Not much fun when the guys can't keep up with you. No one can learn unless they're constantly challenged and brought up to the highest standards of excellence."

And excellence is what his career is all about. "I want to be the best, the very best in a tag team," he said.



George goes out of his way to maintain a good relationship with his fans. The crowds bring out all his potential, he says.

"To me, there's nothing like the satisfaction of a tag team working together perfectly, meshing completely and totally."

"And me and Dewey are the best. You wait and see." □

SMART CHAMPION

(Continued from Page 40)

Superstar. The challenge of deceiving a moron isn't enough for someone like me. But the money's good and I love being champion."

Masked Superstar doesn't like Piper's insults.

"First of all, I'm more than willing to put myself against Piper in any test of intellect he can devise," he said. "And I won't go any further than that in discussing intellects because then it'll seem like I'm defending my brain and I just don't have to.

"But let me tell you one thing about Roddy Piper and his supposed superior brain. You cannot respect a man who uses his intelligence, and I'll grant Piper his intelligence, for the purposes of evil. Piper would be a lot better off getting his head straight and realizing that there is more to life than breaking people's skulls, like I did," said Superstar.

"He might be intelligent, but I'm sure he isn't happy," finished Superstar.

Piper snickered at Superstar's remarks.

"The only time I'm unhappy is when I have to speak with such piddling morons as Superstar," said the Mid-Atlantic champion. "That's when I am saddened. I hate explaining myself to fools. Usually I just speak out, secure in the knowledge they can't possibly understand.

"That's why I told everyone I knew exactly when Superstar would tire. Even with that knowledge, Superstar couldn't beat me. As for his comments that I'm not using my intelligence for what he considers proper purposes, all I have to do is ask who is the champion."

Piper caressed the diamond-studded belt around his waist and laughed. □

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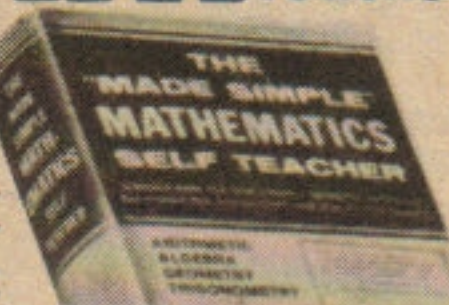
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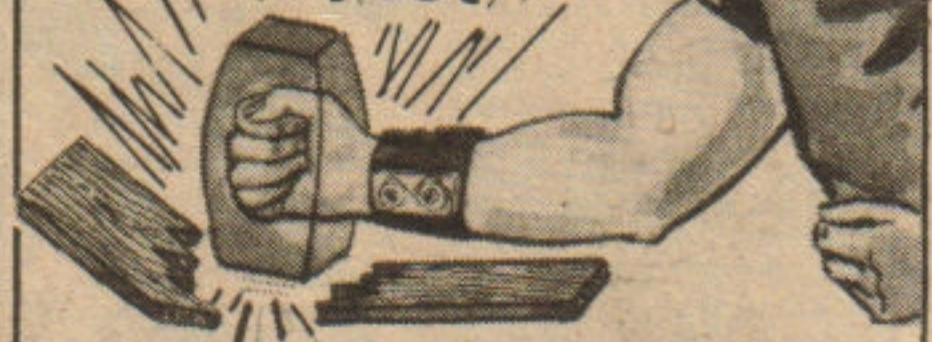
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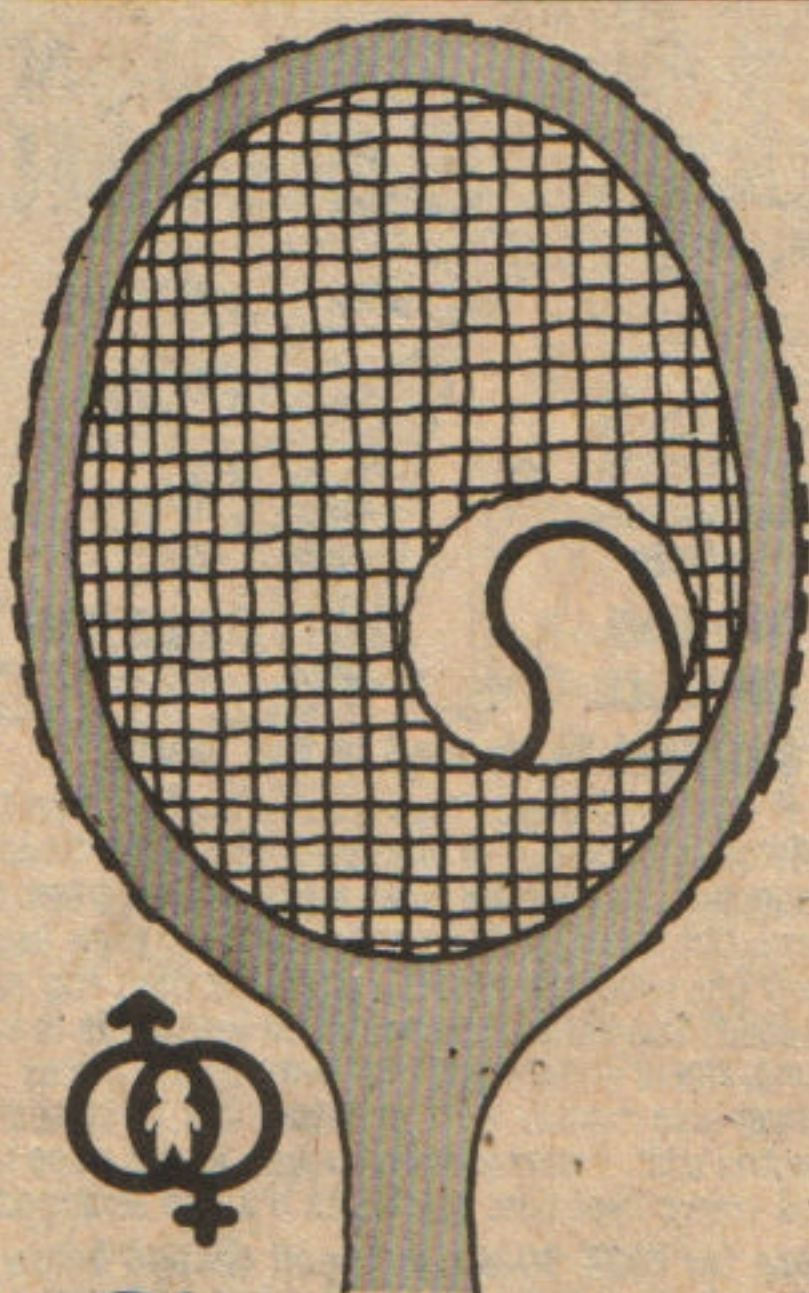
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Q & A

(Continued from Page 25)



DiBiase will always remember winning the Missouri belt as one of the turning points in his life. Though the defense of that belt is extremely important to him, Ted still looks ahead to the day when he will be holding up the NWA belt.

weight title.

A: And that might have been the worst thing that ever happened to me. Quite frankly, I wasn't mentally prepared to defend a title. I was still the cocky kid who thought he knew everything.

Q: And when Masked Grappler beat you for the belt, what happened?

A: I couldn't believe it. I couldn't understand how I could lose, hey, in my dreams, I never lost a title match, understand? I think at that point I started

coming back down to earth, coming to grips with what I had to do, in a practical way, to get to where I want to be, world champion. I had to fight back the growing bitterness and frustration and take a good hard look at Ted DiBiase.

Q: Did you like what you saw?

A: Some. I liked the talent and determination. I didn't like the anger.

Q: What'd you do about the anger?

A: Tried to harness it. I spoke

to other young guys like Ric Flair and Rick Steamboat, guys with explosive tempers, guys who've had their share of ups and downs early on. Finally I learned that disappointment is just part of the game. Either you accept it, learn from it, and try to move up, or you destroy yourself. If I learned one thing already, it's that no foe I'll ever face has a greater potential to destroy my career than myself.

Q: Now that you're in Georgia, you've taken on some tough guys.

A: Yeah, Mongolian Stomper and those Freebirds, they can keep you pretty busy.

Q: But you've got a good advisor.

A: Oh, when you have Mr. Wrestling II helping and offering some advice, that's gotta make you a better wrestler and a better man.

Q: What do you think of The Fabulous Freebirds and The Stomper?

A: Not much, really. You have to give the Birds credit for shrewdness, though. They may be sick turkeys, but they know how to win. They're really smart. As for Stomper, he's just a cruel, evil man, him and Carson.

Q: But your real goal is beyond Georgia, right?

A: I want to be champion. I want to beat Harley Race.

Q: Honestly speaking, are you ready to become NWA champion?

A: I think I know myself real well. I think I can handle it. But first, I have to beat him. He's awfully tough and cunning.

Q: Do you ever doubt your ability to beat him?

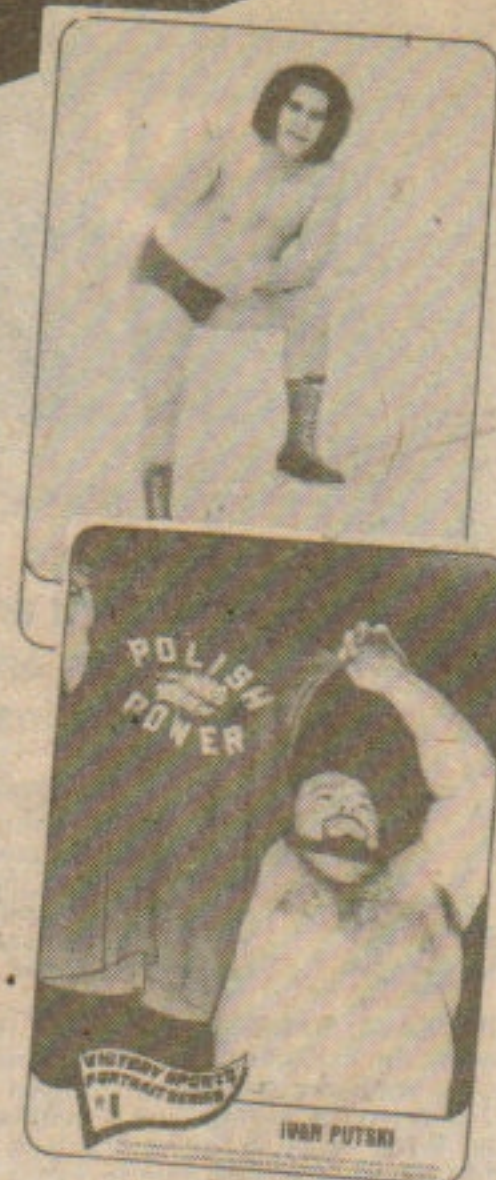
A: Nope. No matter what, I always knew someday, I'd be wearing that belt. Some dreams never change. ☐

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